

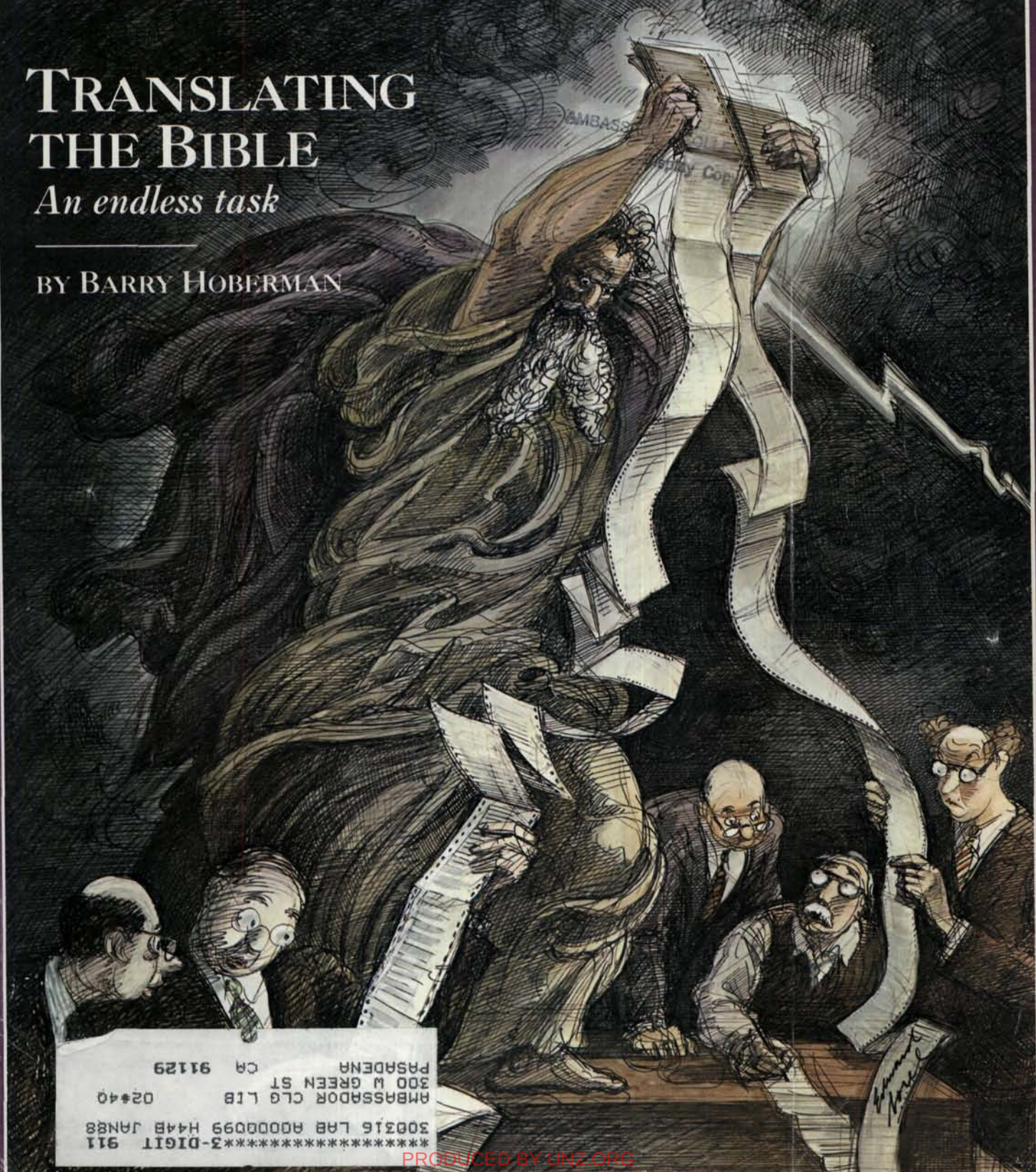
The Atlantic

THE CRISIS IN ECONOMIC THINKING / HUMOR BY ROY BLOUNT, JR.

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

An endless task

BY BARRY HOBERMAN



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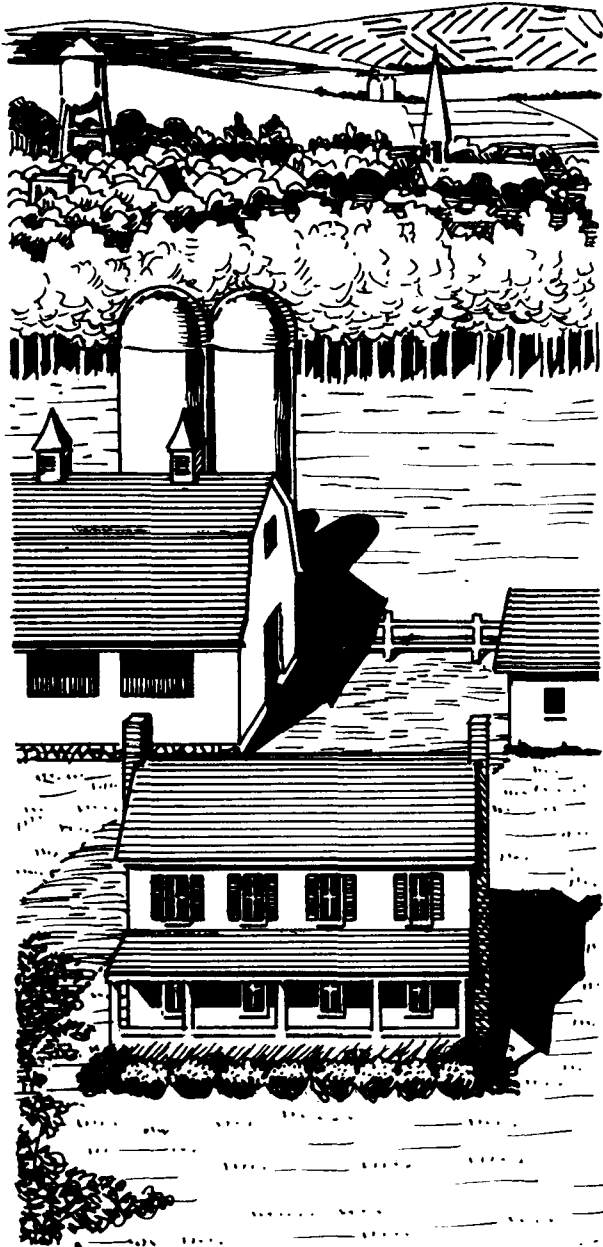
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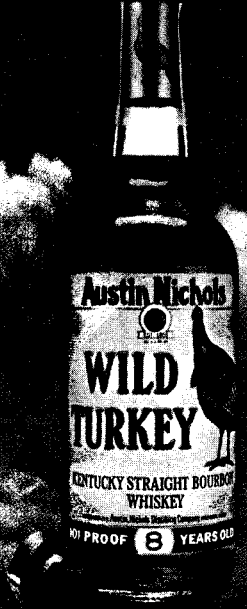
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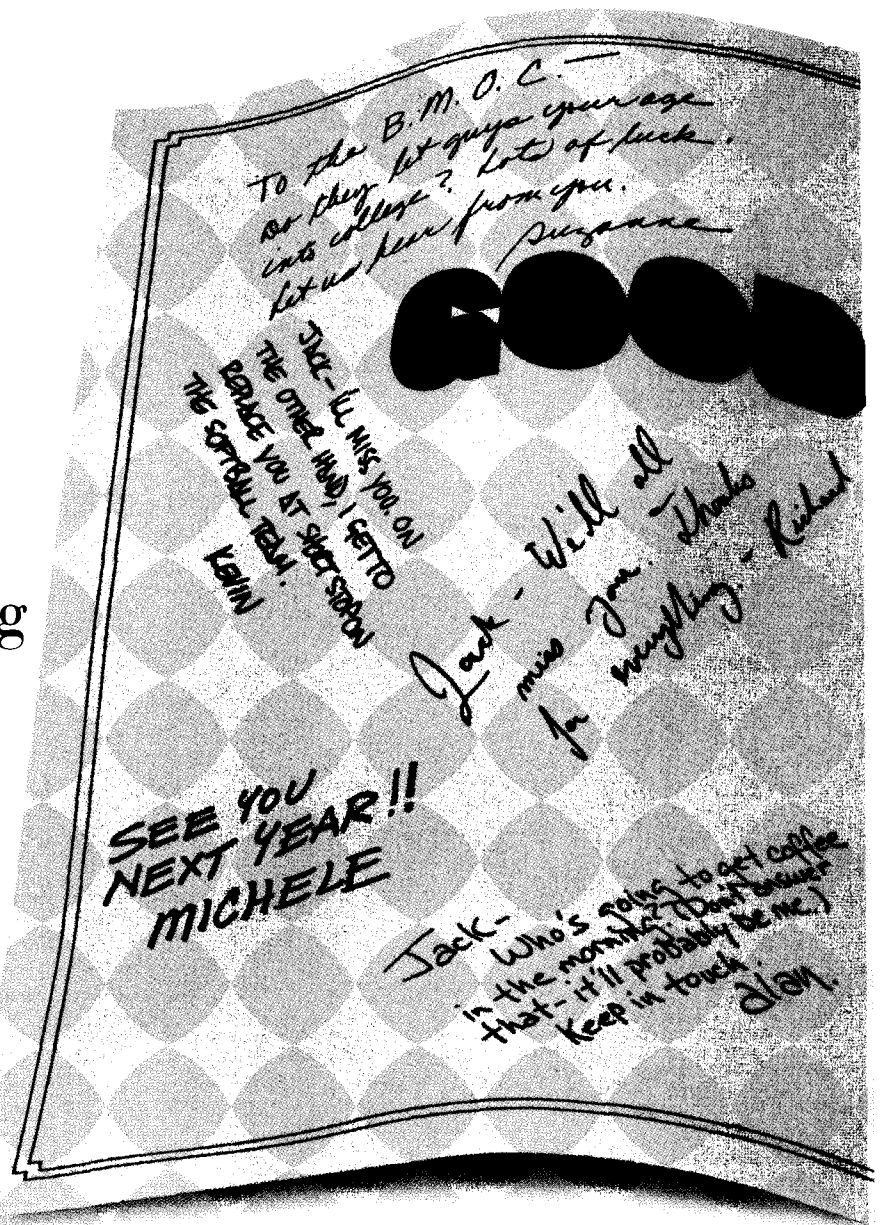
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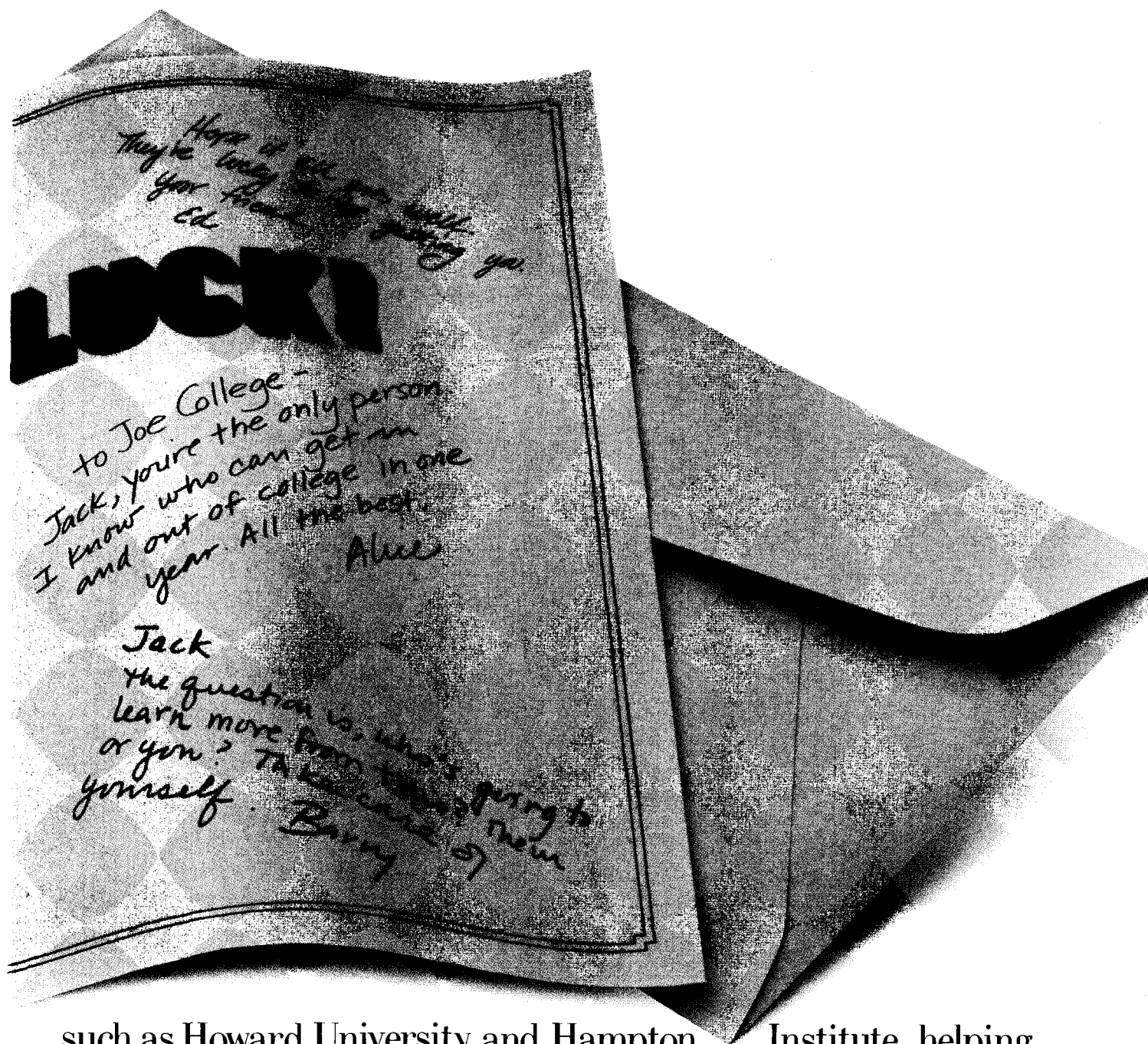
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NUCLEAR WINTER

Thomas Powers's optimistic "Nuclear Winter and Nuclear Strategy" (November *Atlantic*) may provide a ray of hope by demonstrating the suicidal consequences of nuclear war. But Powers failed to take account of two things:

1) The "nuclear winter" calculations are based on the blast and heat yields of conventional thermonuclear weapons. I would be surprised if the Department of Defense was not, at this very moment, studying and/or implementing the conversion of our conventional warheads to neutron warheads. These "enhanced-radiation" weapons sharply reduce the actual physical effects of heat, so that blast and fallout are reduced to minimum levels, perhaps low enough to avoid the effects of a nuclear winter, while the lethal and disabling effects of radiation on humans are increased.

2) Powers says that "the nuclear-winter problem does not end the possibility of a big war with Russia, but it does push planners in a new direction, away from apocalypse. Nothing stands in the way of this change except habit, inertia, and the quite staggering cost in money of building a whole new arsenal." Rather than standing in the way of change, the "staggering cost" (which may really not be so great) may be the very reason that the Pentagon will welcome and endorse the nuclear-winter scenario. James Fallows has written of the "iron triangle" of the "culture of procurement," in which the high cost of weapons is seen as an asset rather than a liability; Gregg Easterbrook, in your August issue, follows the same line of thinking; and Nicholas Lemann, in your October issue, clearly implies that American strategy is for arms-race escalation rather than disarmament. George W. Ball (in *The New York Review of Books*, November 8, 1984) has stated the position unambiguously: "America . . . [is] trying to speed the process of Soviet decay by economic pressures. . . . [We will] outspend and outpace the Russians in the arms race and thus, by bringing further pressure on their faltering economy, force them to give up their ambitions."

In this light the nuclear winter is good news to the Pentagon and to those who profit from defense spending. Indeed,

the redirection of our spending to build (or convert) a whole new arsenal may give the world a period of peace until the new weapons are operational. Furthermore, if "staggering cost" is involved, we may be forced, serendipitously, to shelve the Star Wars research, which could have such destabilizing effects.

But our "providential salvation" will not come through the findings of science or the consequences of technology. Only through economic, political, and moral changes will the world be safe from nuclear disaster. Einstein was right when he said that with the atomic bomb everything is changed except our ways of thinking. It is in the arduous task of re-educating the planet that our hope lies.

LOUIS GOLDMAN

Wichita, Kans.

I disagree with Thomas Powers's conclusion that a recognition of the nuclear-winter theory bodes well for future nuclear stability between the superpowers. In fact the theory might destabilize Soviet-American relations by leading one side to believe that it can actually fight and win a nuclear war.

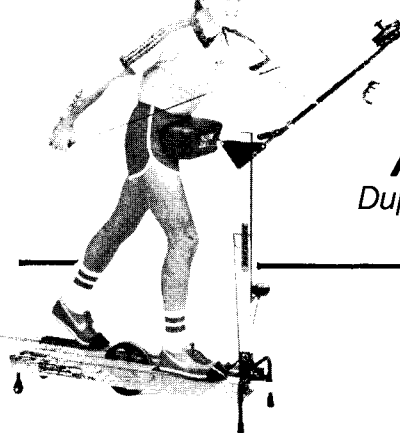
The reason for this has to do with the megatonnage level required to trigger the nuclear-winter effect. Although further research is necessary, Carl Sagan has estimated that 250 to 1,000 megatons would generate sufficient smoke, soot, and so forth to block out the sun's rays. Once a megaton ceiling is determined with precision, an aggressor might well be tempted, especially during a crisis, to launch a first strike using just enough nuclear weapons to remain below the nuclear-winter threshold. The incentive for attacking first in this manner would be that it would prevent a retaliatory strike (or else precipitate global catastrophe) and thus spare the aggressor's homeland.

MITCHELL REISS

London, England

Thomas Powers carefully describes the evolution of the effective way to destroy urban targets, from high-explosive to incendiary bombs. If this principle holds, it is not what kind of "match" is used but the resulting fires that will lead to catastrophic climatic change. The use of big nuclear matches, deliv-

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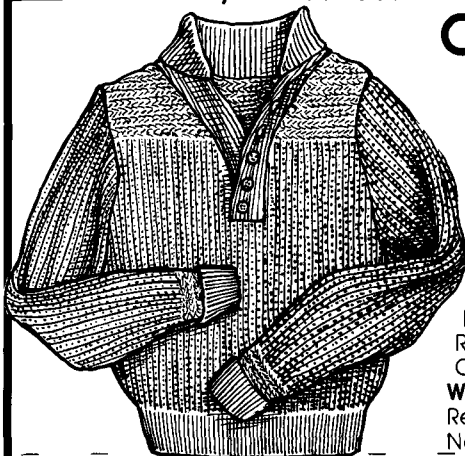
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ered in minutes, will have the same effect as many smaller non-nuclear matches delivered over a longer period of time. The smoke will still accumulate in the atmosphere.

We must not make the mistake of turning away from nuclear weapons and then entering a furious arms race to develop non-nuclear weapons that can cause the same net result. The only answer is the elimination of all strategic weapons, nuclear and non-nuclear.

A. DOUGLAS SCOTT
Winthrop, Maine

MORE ON THE LIBERTY

The Atlantic has rendered a valuable service by publishing Hirsh Goodman and Zeev Schiff's article "The Attack on the *Liberty*" (September issue), outlining the tragic sequence of errors that led Israelis to misidentify the *Liberty* as an Egyptian vessel.

An impartial observer investigating the incident would be obliged to reason that unless Israel's very existence were at stake, a deliberate Israeli attack on an American vessel would have been completely irrational; that Israel's existence was clearly not at stake in the *Liberty* incident; that by all accounts Israel's political and military actions in the 1967 war were entirely rational; and that, ergo, the attack on the *Liberty* was not deliberate.

Since the Israeli attack on the vessel occurred in the midst of a war against Egypt, which possessed a large and diversified navy, the only possible explanation for the attack is the misidentification of the *Liberty* as an Egyptian warship. Circumstantial evidence to the contrary must be seen as a consequence of the usual confusion attending any war. Tragically, the Israeli forces, like those of the United States and many other countries, have erred and even mistakenly attacked some of their own units. When Goodman and Schiff, two highly respected Israeli journalists known for their professionalism and integrity, produce previously unavailable internal evidence of Israel's mistakes, their account merits credence.

MICHAEL CURTIS
Professor of Political Science
Rutgers University
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I have just finished reading "The Attack on the *Liberty*," and want to commend *The Atlantic* for a factual and rea-

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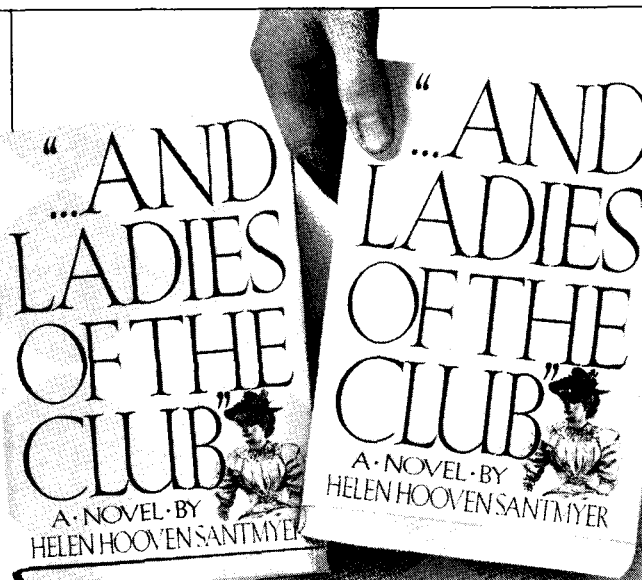
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soned analysis of a tragic event in the long and warm relationship between the United States and Israel.

As a former U.S. Marine officer, I understand how easy it is for combatants in the field to make errors that can have extremely serious consequences. Consequently, I see no useful purpose in constructing a balance sheet of errors in order to ascertain whether the greater number was perpetrated by our people or by the Israelis. The article makes clear that there were more than enough errors to go around and that the attack on the *Liberty* was tragic but most certainly an accident. Only malice, or special interest, can cause one to conclude that the Israelis intended to assault an American vessel.

PERRY J. SHERTZ
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

"The Attack on the *Liberty*" offers new insights into the hazards of intelligence-gathering in war zones coupled with human errors in communication. Thus it is remarkable that repeated warnings to the USS *Liberty* from the commander of the Sixth Fleet and from the Joint Chiefs were never received. Likewise, Israeli officers were misguided by such factors as faulty radar readings. Above all, the article is further evidence of the tragic mistakes of war. Have not American or allied forces in Vietnam been subjected to bombing in error by friendly planes?

But as for the war in 1967, Israel stood alone, fighting for survival in the face of aggressive moves by Egypt and its allies to "drive the Jews into the sea." Israel's navy was weak, as noted by Goodman and Schiff, and its coastal heartland vulnerable to attack; "unidentified" vessels included Soviet spy ships nearby.

That Arab propagandists continue to exploit the *Liberty* incident is the making of war through other means.

JOSEPH BRANDES
Professor of History
William Paterson College
Wayne, N.J.

SCHOLARSHIP VERSUS CULTURE

Enough. Even the most devoted fan of redundancy has to rebel at Jacques Barzun's latest exercise in self-plagiarism. But the truly galling feature of his essay ("Scholarship Versus Culture," November issue) is not its stunning lack of originality—one could almost enjoy

the sensation it affords, déjà vu raised to a higher power—were it not for the vacuity of its thesis. If you're going to write clichés, you may as well pick the true ones.

Of course university learning is laughable. That hasn't been news since Rabelais published the card catalogue of the Library of St. Victor. Assembling the modern equivalents of the *Ars Petendi in Ecclesiam* is nearly as agreeable as Senator Proxmire's Golden Fleece Awards for research projects he doesn't understand.

One can't do justice to human possibility by clinging to a short list of freshman profundities even if going ahead means thinking about literature instead of memorizing a Western Civ. textbook. The basic problem is that Mr. Barzun is too easy to satisfy. His idea of a cultured man is someone with sufficient learning to purchase and read a Jacques Barzun book and murmur, "How profound." Thus, despite the quotations from Nietzsche, Barzun's culture criticism is simply an attempt to give complacency a good conscience. To which one can only respond, in the phrase of Olive Oyl, "Phooey."

JIM HARRISON
San Francisco, Calif.

As a graduate student writing yet another thesis on *Moby-Dick*, I can attest to the accuracy of Jacques Barzun's observation concerning "poor Melville"—that "like Saint Sebastian he is the target of all the arrows of all the methods." However, though the corporeal Melville was relatively poor, he cannot suffer from the analytical harpoons now fast to so much of his work. Besides, Melville asked for it.

In his brief catalogue of titles, "products" turned out by the culture industry, Barzun mentions *Melville's Thematics of Form*, by Edgar A. Dryden. It is clear in Dryden's book (and, I think, in any thoughtful reading of *Moby-Dick*) that Melville was a quite self-conscious artist who wrote that novel "with deliberate intent to commit an aesthetic act," to use Barzun's words. As Dryden and others have pointed out in their analyses, Melville made good use of his self-consciousness in turning out a wonderful book, a book that deliberately invites interpretation. Dryden's book makes its own appeal to the "esprit de finesse." He simply made an unfortunate choice of title.

MARK METCALF
Monroe, Neb.

The parallelism in the November *Atlantic* between an innocent lad's reply to Dr. Johnson—"I would give what I have" ("Scholarship Versus Culture," by Jacques Barzun)—and Thomas Powers's comment that in war planning we *plan* to do what we *can* do ("Nuclear Winter and Nuclear Strategy") is striking. Isn't it a shame that the USA and the USSR can't fulfill this simple parallel: we shall trust what we must trust?

JACK STEPHENSON
St. Helens, Oreg.

Jacques Barzun says, "Faced with the vitamin-C principle of the curriculum, with the good life of That Cosmopolitan Girl, the born believer in something more intense has only one avenue of escape, which is the specialism of the single-track connoisseur." There is at least St. John's College, in Annapolis, Maryland, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a second path. At St. John's students adhere to the Great Books Program, for which they read the ancient Greeks, Virgil, the Bible, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare, and other such authors (and composers) in historical order, right up to T. S. Eliot. These works are studied by meditation and conservation: by studying the works without "critical texts" and discussing them in seminars and tutorials. At St. John's students are not "given" an education. They acquire an education through their own earnest efforts. This and the nature of that education make St. John's one school in which true culture thrives.

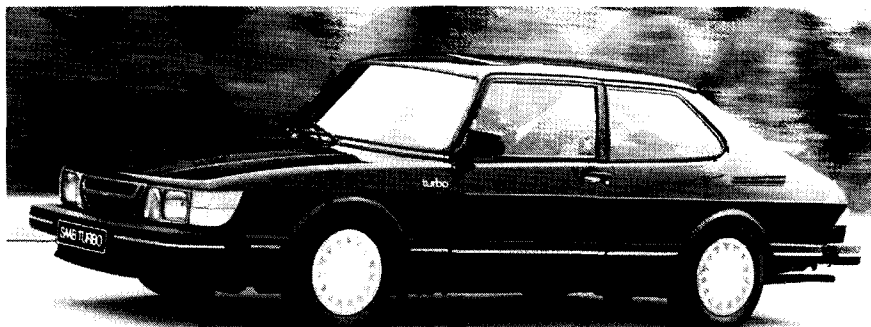
JAY POWERS
Santa Fe, N.M.

LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS

As a scientist who has worked on Apollo and as the author of *Is There Intelligent Life on Earth?*, I feel compelled to object to articles like your November piece "The Search for Life on Other Planets," by Robert P. Crease and Charles C. Mann. The main argument of such articles is statistical: there are billions of suns; some of these suns must have planets; among these planets there ought to be some that are habitable.

For some reason we do not laugh at the idea that one of these planets might house a rabble of wrinkled scientists ready, eager, and able to communicate with us. Nevertheless, the promise of intelligent alien civilizations is held out even in serious NASA reports, submitted

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to a government of politicians who are even more confused by the subject than the scientists are.

None of this would bother me, were not NASA scientists, as your article points out, spending millions on microwave-receiving systems designed to listen for "messages." We could easily prove, in an experiment that would cost about \$30, that without translators a scientist who speaks only English could not possibly communicate with a scientist who speaks only Chinese. Imagine trying to communicate with alien organisms biologically unrelated to anything that has ever existed on this planet—if they exist at all. Those millions of "communication" dollars would serve us better if a board of science and technology used them as a down payment on a large-scale program to redesign human society. If we can make a start in that direction, perhaps we can then say there are intelligent beings on *Earth*.

JACK CATRAN
Sepulveda, Calif.

The fascinating article by Crease and Mann mentions many difficulties in attempting to determine whether there is extraterrestrial intelligence in the universe, but it does not mention one obstacle that could make the results of the search inconclusive. Failure to detect any signals indicative of intelligent transmission would not necessarily mean there are no potential senders "out there." If it takes thousands of years for a radio signal from another solar system to reach us, our inability to detect any messages could simply mean that several thousand years ago the technology of the beings on a distant planet was comparable to the technology on our own planet in the relatively recent past.

NORMAN M. ARKAWY
Rye Brook, N.Y.

Robert P. Crease and Charles C. Mann reply:

We were surprised by the vehemence of Mr. Catran's objections, especially in light of the small size of the annual outlay for the NASA SETI program. To reject SETI, as Mr. Catran does, because of the alleged impossibility of intelligent life in space is exactly as wrong as assuming that it does exist and then urging the expenditure of huge sums to find it. Similarly, to assert flatly that people cannot communicate with aliens is as foolish as claiming that all aliens speak English. Nobody knows, but some of the SETI

advocates are attempting to find out.

Mr. Arkawy is right. One of the variables of the Drake equation describing the number of civilizations that might talk to us is, to quote from our article, "the fraction of intelligent civilizations that are in a phase during which they are willing and able to make contact." Presumably, "willing and able" includes possession of radio technology.

COUNTING THE VOTE

Thanks to Cullen Murphy for helping to direct attention to voting-systems issues in his article "Big Business in Ballots" (November *Atlantic*).

However, the 1982 gubernatorial contest in Illinois was decided by an even narrower margin than the article indicated. The incumbent governor, James R. Thompson, defeated Adlai E. Stevenson III by just 5,074 votes out of 3,856,875 ballots cast, not by 9,401 votes out of 3,616,865 ballots cast.

Moreover, Chicago does not use lever machines in the conduct of its elections. Since 1982 Chicago has used a punch-card system with computer vote tabulation.

MICHAEL L. HARTY
*Illinois State Board of Elections
Springfield, Ill.*

Cullen Murphy replies:

Mr. Harty is correct. The figures I cited were unofficial returns as reported by *The New York Times*.

ADVICE & CONSENT

The letters you printed in the November issue in response to the article on the F-20 by Gregg Easterbrook ("The Airplane That Doesn't Cost Enough," August *Atlantic*) were certainly tough on his "factual errors." Particularly striking was Caspar Weinberger's, instructing us on how procurement actually works.

I've worked more than a few years as an aerospace engineer and on several occasions have been involved with pricing "exercises" in Air Force contracts. I wish I had the space to provide a full account of the nonsense involved in these number manipulations, by vendors as well as defense-procurement people.

Weinberger says, "In every case our major consideration is to obtain the systems that will best defend our country at

least expense to the taxpayer." The truth is that the more costly a program is, the more heavyweight it is and the more important and powerful are the people who administer it.

Another correspondent thinks that most of the inefficiencies in the procurement system stem from bureaucratic efforts to incorporate the constantly changing state of the art in technology. Some of the inefficiencies, yes, but most really do stem from the elaborate dealing and game-playing among the good old boys, thickly layered through the defense-procurement agencies and the defense contractors. It's not all venality and cunning, however. Many inefficiencies are simply the result of incompetence.

Whatever errors of detail the article may have had, its thesis is right on the mark: the F-20's cost is an embarrassment to people who have been administering multibillion-dollar programs and telling us that we're just barely safe.

JOHN D. GOETZINGER
Bellevue, Wash.

After a second reading of Nicholas Lemann's "The Peacetime War," in your October issue, and in the dark night following the presidential election, I recalled "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Here is the result.

LOYALTY

His not to reason why.
His but to gladly buy!
Into the valley of debt
Charges the brave Caspar.

All that the Pentagon
Wanted for Leader Ron!
Into the valley of debt
Charged our brave Caspar.

What though the deficit
Mounts like a high-priced jet?
Into the valley of debt
Charges brave Caspar.

R. GREGORY BELCHER
Dunedin, Fla.

Re Leon Lukaszewski's letter, in your October issue, chiding Roy Blount, Jr., for misspelling *illusion* as *allusion*: as far as I can tell from the citation, Mr. Blount's spelling is correct. He was referring to an *indirect mention*, not an *unreal image*; one would have trouble getting off the latter "in the real world." The problem here is not that Mr. Blount does not know Greek but that Mr. Lukaszewski does not know English.

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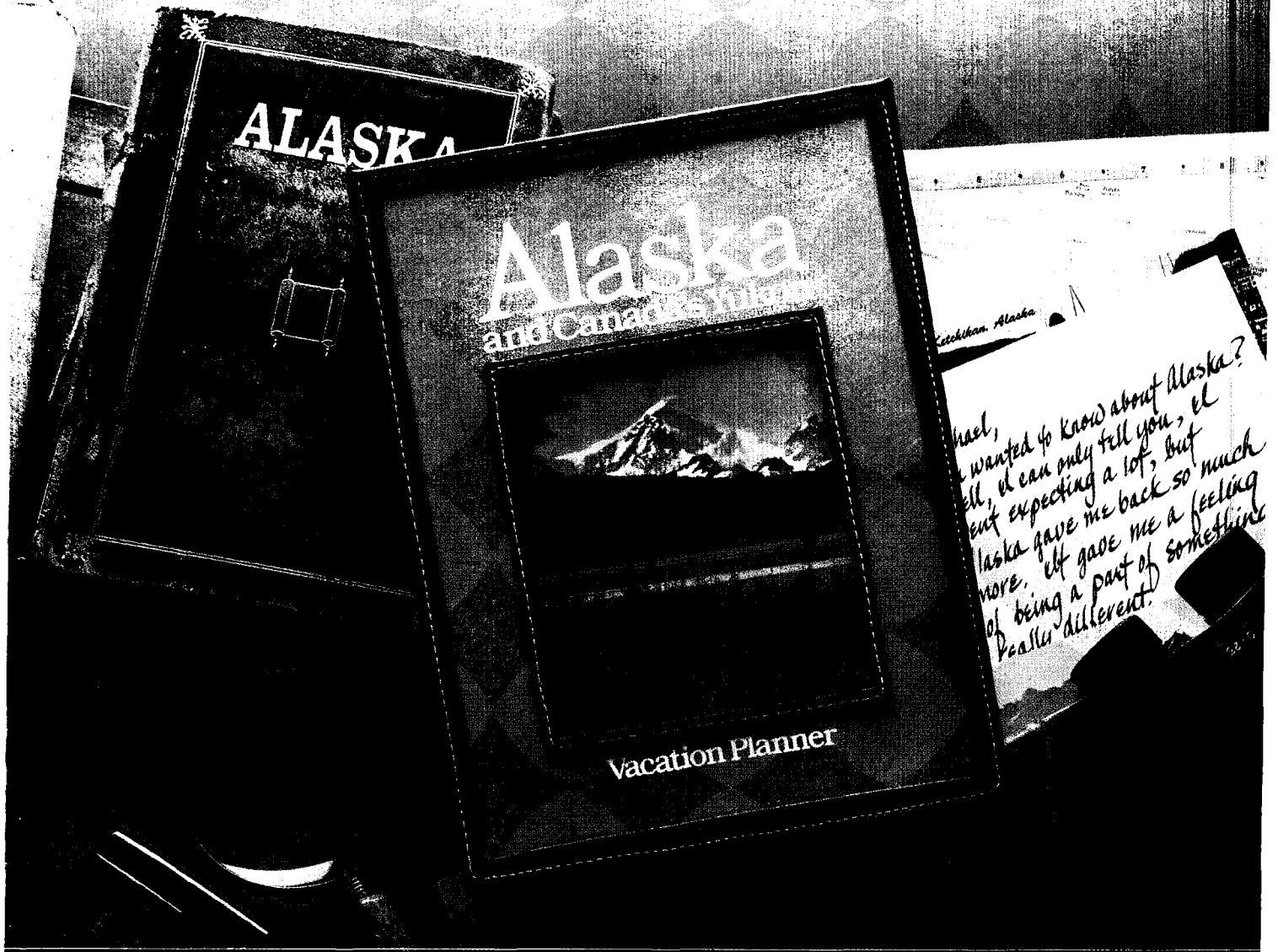
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A L A S K A



REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

TYPE B, A-WISE

Life in the slow lane has its challenges

People with Type-A personalities—those uptight, compulsive, competitive, aggressive, sometimes hostile, insecure overachievers—can greatly reduce their chances for a heart attack by modifying their behavior characteristics, according to a study by San Francisco physician Dr. Meyer Friedman and Stanford Prof. Carl Thoresen of the School of Education. . . .

Driving in the slow lane instead of the fast lane, stopping at a traffic light when it turns yellow, lingering at the dinner table, standing in the longer rather than shorter grocery lines, speaking more slowly, and learning to smile more at strangers were a few of the exercises tried.

—Item from the Stanford University News Service

SATURDAY. ARISE, AS is my habit, at 5:15 A.M. Listen to news in course of sixty bench presses, a hundred sit-ups. Translate two of Horace's "Epodes" into Urdu before scanning the *Examiner* and the *Chronicle*, Dow Theory Forecasts, Value Line Investment Survey. Brush teeth in shower. Down diet pill with instant espresso. Sort mail on porta-desk while . . . doggone it, she did it again. Second time since giving notice. Compose terse memo to maid on which way toilet paper should unfurl (blind carbon to wife). Turn roll around. Same damn story. Want something done right, got to do it yourself. Ticks me off. Already 6:20, and books still uncatalogued, *Economist* unread.

"Slow down, you move too fast,/ You

got to make the morning last." Words of song somehow percolate into sentence as I shave. Point conceded. Foot off the pedal. Deep breath, count to ten—0 . . . 1 . . . 0—urgently taking binary shortcut. Doesn't work, still revved up. Maybe Doc Friedman right after all. Maybe time to road-test some pacing drills—win one for the ticker.

Switch at once from brace of Norelcos, deployed on both jowls, to single Wilkinson Sword blade. During 273 seconds this adds to task recall that Wilkinson Sword helped carry day at Omdurman, Kandahar. (Norelco, *maybe*, was at Grenada.) Don trousers one leg at time, soon get hang of it. Feel better already. Serene, resolute, join spouse for usual repast of Tang and Toaster Tarts. *La*

plume de ma tante est dans le jardin. Only seductive drone of Berlitz lesson disturbs morning stillness as we eat.

Resolve to linger for ten minutes after meal. Linger, linger, linger, linger, shred a napkin, tap a finger. Ever notice how mind slips into rhythmic rut during arbitrary waste of time? America is back, America is back. Or, worse, "Winchester Cathedral." Linger, moreover, starting when? When *I* finish? When *wife* does? What if there are houseguests? Produce Heuer stopwatch and measure interval between first cleaned plate (mine, at 7:13:26.4 A.M.) and last (hers, at 7:24:53.9), determine midpoint (7:19:10.15), and calculate ten-minute period from there (can get up, in other words, four minutes, sixteen and one quarter seconds after wife puts down fork). Set egg timer. In ensuing restorative interlude can almost hear mitral valve murmur thanks. Heartbeat downshifts gratefully into theme from *Hawaii Five-O*.

Ping! Time's up. Next stop: supermarket. Direct route exists to store from home, no signs or signals. Chart course instead through twenty-six traffic lights, four "all way" stop signs. Opportunity, now, to brake for amber, practice relaxation skills. Tough snaring yellow light when you need one, even knowing synchronization pattern. Always arrhythmias in timing cycle. Keep having to wait at green. "All way" stop signs more reliable. Rule of road: First car at intersection gets right of way, other vehicles follow, counterclockwise. Here *I* exercise wholesome restraint. Let seven full cycles go by before asserting legal rights. Good place, by the way, to return phone calls while paying bills or, better, take time to smell the flowers (keep bunch within reach on passenger seat). Bad time, though, for (Honk!) *Die Schreiberfeder meiner Tante* (Honk!) *ist in dem Gar-*





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ten (Beep-beep!). In occluded roadway to rear restive motorists bleat a path to Infarct City. Heart goes out to the bastards.

On to supermarket for time-absorption therapy. Grocery list organized so no two consecutive items will be found in same aisle. Doesn't work out perfectly, needless to say. Always a slip somewhere. Turns out Tylenol next to the QT, antacid across from the Bisquick. Blessing in disguise, frankly. No choice now but suddenly to "remember" something never meant to buy—gosh, left off Belgian endives—and perambulate to Produce before turning back to Tums. Time filling shopping cart expands to one hour, fifty-eight minutes, exceeding estimate. Automated arterial-hypertension monitor near checkout gauges systolic blood pressure at 190. Big plunge since breakfast, but room for improvement. Won't give up till down to zero.

Checkout time. Question: Which line at bank of counters is really longest? Is "longest" same as "slowest"? Checkout-line metabolism exceedingly complex. Store size, day of week, line length, cart volume, checker speed, payment method—only a few of twenty-seven identified variables. Embolism appears unpredictably, brought on perhaps by out-of-town check, unpriced foodstuff. Just as suddenly clot may clear.

Decide to leave nothing to chance. Divide purchases into several carts, nine items or fewer in each. Go through so-called Express Lane, always congested, as many times as needed (eleven) till shopping done. On each sortie insinuate baffling items into carts of customers in front, prompting further delays. ("Hey, hold it, whoa! Where'd those endives come from?" "Sorry, sir, I've already rung them up.")

Ideal time, I discover, to smile at strangers, fore and aft. Less a smile, actually, than a lips-sealed, corners-piquantly-upturned conveyance of guarded bonhomie. Result confirmed in pocket mirror. Exhibit fifty-seven smiles in all, of which twenty-one, unfortunately, are returned. Median artery reveals pulse rate idling at ninety-eight.

Take interstate home, winding up workout with lap of slow-lane prophylaxis. Enveloped on highway by feeling of great calm, inner peace. Should have inaugurated new regimen years ago. Teeth grind softly as I savor prospect of quality time with son (three) home for weekend from pre-school. Been clamoring to learn how to snap a paper clip,

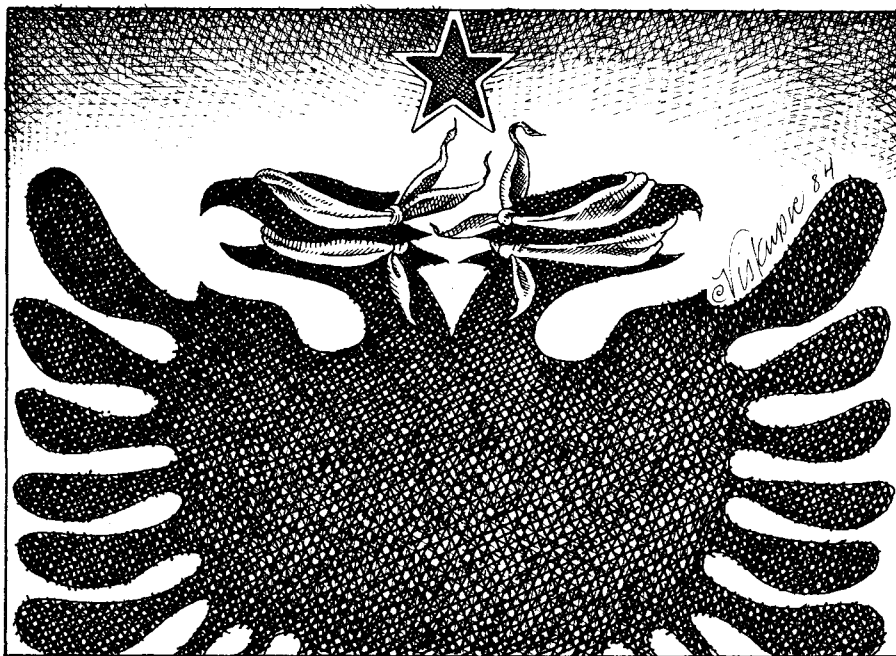
cheat at cards. Got to pull up those Aminuses first. From behind, siren's scream overtakes rich Slavic sonorities on tape cassette. Ease onto shoulder. "Do you know how fast you were going?" Ручка тѣти в саду. Repeat after me. Ручка тѣти в. . . "Turn that thing off. Do you know how fast you were going?" Smile number fifty-eight, not returned. Of course I know. Twenty-three and two-tenths miles per hour. Двадцать три

и две десятых. A speed you can live with.

Make sure to record benchmark in MemoMaster. Next time out must trim back those tenths. Courting another ticket, of course, but I'll fight that one, too.

—Cullen Murphy

Cullen Murphy is a senior editor of The Wilson Quarterly.



ALBANIA

THE SPARK THAT MAY CAUSE A FIRE

Why the Soviets might want to invade Albania: a scenario

WHATEVER ITS MERITS in other regards, Marxism-Leninism often increases the longevity of those of its subjects who are enjoying the actual exercise of unlimited political power. We have all been reminded of this phenomenon in recent years, when we have attended on our television screens the numerous Red Square funerals of members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) politburo, whose earthly lives had been concluded at ages ranging between seventy and eighty-five. The statutes of the CPSU still prescribe that a good Bolshevik never retires from the fight for World Revolution

to which he dedicated himself in his youth.

The same is true in Eastern European countries subjugated by the USSR. Once their original "old Bolshevik" leaders had been executed, under Stalin's orders, in the early fifties, or kicked out for their counter-revolutionary *faux pas*, in the sixties and seventies, the rule was faithfully applied throughout Eastern Europe—consider János Kádár, of Hungary, Gustáv Husák, of Czechoslovakia, and Nicolae Ceaușescu, of Romania—but never with greater success than in the case of the two Communist rebel leaders Marshal Tito and Enver Hoxha (pronounced *Hodja*). Tito ruled Yugoslavia for almost forty years. Hoxha, who founded and who was named the leader of the Communist Party of Albania in 1941, still enjoys this position. His absolute rule over Albania has successfully resisted many attacks from inside his own party. (The plotters have usually been found dead; the most famous of them, Mehmet Shehu, had been Hoxha's best friend and perennial Number 2 for thirty-five years.) More-

over, Hoxha has been able to thwart successive attempts against his life or his power engendered by the Yugoslavs and the Russians. The hands of the apostles Marx and Lenin must really have been upon his head.

But, alas, no man—not even a confirmed Bolshevik—is immortal. One day death will summon Hoxha, and neither his astuteness nor his cruelty will suffice to drive it from his sickbed. There will be general mourning on the part of the Albanian people, and some of it will even be sincere. Fires will burn on the mountains and old muskets will be fired in the valleys; his corpse will be mummified and buried in state, much as Stalin's was (Hoxha is the most obdurate of Stalin's admirers). Then the tumult and the shouting will fade, and the tiny Balkan country will tread on toward an uncertain future.

Since the end of the Second World War, Albania has made headlines only three times: when the Yugoslav suzerains were replaced by the Russians; when the latter were superseded by the Chinese; when the Chinese were drily thanked for their help and asked to leave. In the past fifteen years very few people in the West have been conscious of the existence, in the southeast of Europe, of this country, which for all intents and purposes might be Tibet. Closed in upon itself, it has practically no communication with the surrounding world except through a small group of trusted officials; has no diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom, the United States, or the USSR; provides scant possibilities for its people to know what is going on in the outside world; allows very little foreign tourism and makes it practically impossible for Albanians to travel abroad. Nobody—not even diplomats in the capital, Tiranë, who are so reduced in number that they often find it difficult to organize a four-some around a bridge table—knows what really happens in Albania. Was Defense Minister Beqir Balluku executed in 1975, because he was a Soviet (a Yugoslav, an American) spy? Did Mehmet Shehu commit suicide, or was he deliberately killed upon orders from high up? Everyone's answer to these and to almost all vital questions is, We honestly do not know. The interest raised among connoisseurs by one of these occurrences quickly dies down: the map of Europe no longer seems to include the small country where in the fifteenth century the hero Skanderbeg led the re-

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volt against the Turks and whence the Ottoman Empire drew its most bellicose janissaries and many of its grand viziers and pashas.

Nevertheless, let's take a look at the map. Albania is a rugged country slightly bigger than Wales, bordered on the north by Montenegro and Kosovo (in Yugoslavia), on the east by Macedonia, on the south by Epirus (in Greece), and on the west by the Adriatic Sea. The Yugoslav province of Kosovo contains more than a million Albanians: no wonder the government of Tiranë considers it "unredeemed." Macedonia, inhabited by Serbians, Bulgarians, Turks, and other ethnic groups, has traditionally been disputed by Balkan countries; the Soviet Union, unanointed successor of Holy Russia, continues to harbor hopes of annexing it to faithful Bulgaria, so as to introduce a wedge between heretical Yugoslavia and NATO Greece. Epirus also, sacred to the manes of Achilles and Pyrrhus, was and might again become a bone of contention between Albania and Greece. Neither Serbia nor Greece, the two main Balkan rivals for hegemony over Albania before the First World War and between the wars, was able to ensure Epirus for itself alone, the reason being that Italy would not allow it. "And now, Zog, how long will it take you to sell yourself to the Italians?" asked Nikola Pašić, the old prime minister of Serbia, in 1925, having finished counting the gold sovereigns thanks to which Prince Ahmed Zogu (later King Zog) was to bring Albania over to Belgrade's side. The answer given by history is, a year and a half. Italy had not allowed the Austro-Hungarian Empire to establish itself firmly at the lower end of the Adriatic, nor was it going to permit anything of the kind to Yugoslavia or Greece.

Why was Italy interested in assuring an Albanian principality under her control or, finally, in establishing a union between the two countries in the person of the head of the reigning family of the King of Savoy (Victor Emmanuel III, the emperor of Ethiopia and the king of Albania during most of the Second World War)? If we take another look at the map, we will see that in the days of naval supremacy freedom of navigation in the Adriatic Sea as far as Venice and Trieste was contingent on the possession, or at least on the control, of both the Italian and Albanian shores of the Strait of Otranto, which connects the Ionian Sea to the Adriatic. It was therefore a principle of Italian foreign policy to

make sure that Albania did not fall into the hands of a strong adversary power.

After 1945 this principle became void. Albania, abandoned by the Fascists at the end of 1943 and by the Nazis in 1944, entered Stalin's empire. Albania was a lonely outpost after Tito's revolt; Stalin's successors didn't know what to do with it. Italy had other problems to cope with, and in any case its political class had been vaccinated against intrusion into Balkan affairs. Now and then there were fleeting rumors about the installation of a base for Soviet submarines in the bay of Vlorë. Before the sixties there was in fact practically no Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, Hoxha expelled the Russians and called in the Chinese. After that episode came to an end and relations with the USSR improved, the government in Tiranë still consistently withheld naval and air force facilities from the Soviet Union and every other country. The country is *blockfrei*, refusing contacts with both the Warsaw and the NATO bloc. It even declines to be counted among the non-aligned countries of the world, or among the neutral countries of Europe (Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland, and Malta); it refused to take part in the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and is not a signatory of the Helsinki Final Act. Albania lives in self-imposed isolation: its people are too proud to surrender, too poor to arouse covetous glances, too valiant for any aggression against them to be worth the candle. Albania is perhaps the last example of the eighteenth-century *Kleinstaaterei*, like Weimar and Parma; or the first application of Schumacher's "Small is beautiful" to the international field; or in the realm of poetry the Dukedom of Illyria, where Viola loves Orsino who loves Olivia who loves Viola, until everything is rearranged in the concluding scene. Except . . .

EXCEPT FOR WHAT might happen after Hoxha's demise—though one must grant that, being only seventy-six, he could survive for several more years. Nevertheless, his advanced age is a good reason for observers of the Balkan scene to begin wondering, and probably planning, about what will happen when he abandons the helm. There is no way of predicting what the political state of affairs in Albania will be after Hoxha's death. Has his succession already been discussed in the Tiranë politburo, or—as seems more likely—is the reigning

chieftain wary of putting this item on the agenda? By letting it be known on whose shoulders his mantle is to fall, a dictator easily builds up a rival and possibly his murderer. May one therefore assume that since there is a large Hoxha faction in the politburo (no doubt about that), this majority faction will assert itself by electing Comrade X as secretary-general of the Party? This scenario is admissible, but it has one flaw: Hoxha has destroyed all his rivals, and thus it could happen that no one of his supporters in the Party's higher ranks will be big enough to fill the tyrant's boots. The apparently unanimous Hoxhaphiles might therefore rapidly divide themselves into two or more rival groups, each under a minor baron; and since Albanian society is still structured on contending clans, the political struggle might be doubled by clan strife. According to this scenario the political scene in Albania would be unstable for a number of years, a state of affairs that could encourage foreign interference, as we shall see.

Suppose that Hoxha's succession were to follow swiftly and in an orderly manner: there might still be cause for trouble. Whoever picks up Hoxha's baton will for a time inevitably be rather weak and exposed. To maintain the status quo would be his best course at first. Whatever official propaganda may say when it invents CIA plots and commandos, Tiranë leaders know only too well that the United States has no reason to destabilize Albania. The Yugoslavs are already having a hard job stifling the discontent of the Albanian minority in Kosovo and would not wish to annex its mother country. As long as Belgrade wants to protect itself from Soviet encroachment, it will remain interested in Albanian stability. The Tiranë leadership will therefore concentrate on the risk of Soviet intrusiveness. Is there a genuine likelihood of Soviet intervention in the small Balkan republic—political, military, or both?

In my opinion, the answer to this question is yes, for reasons that are durable in both the short and the long term. It is easy to see what advantages the USSR would reap from the return of the prodigal son to the Warsaw Pact (Albania was the only member that got out of the Pact of its own free will and without suffering reprisals). The re-establishment of Soviet influence in Albania would enable Moscow to exert pressure on Yugoslavia by encouraging Albanian irredentism toward Kosovo and umpiring the



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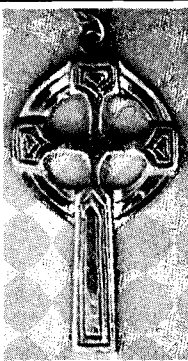
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two parties' claims. Greece's allegiance to NATO, already enfeebled by her conflict with Turkey and by Andreas Papan-dreou's inclination toward non-align-ment, would be further weakened. The long-coveted Albanian ports (Durrës, Vlorë, and Sarandë) might be opened to the Soviet Mediterranean fleet, which could use them for overhauling, refit-ting, onshore leaves, supplies, and other purposes for which it does not have fa-cilities in the Mediterranean except, to a very small extent, at Latakia, in Syria. The annexation of Albania would, fur-thermore, allow Soviet forces to estab-lish electronic surveillance over much of the Mediterranean region, including central and southern Italy and its is-lands, and mainland Greece and its is-lands. Reconnaissance and attack planes could be based at modernized airports with underground hangars: the defense plans of Allied Forces South (NATO's southern command) would have to be substantially modified. Finally, only extreme measures by NATO would pre-vent the USSR from installing tactical nuclear missiles targeted upon Italy, Yu-goslavia, and Greece. These three coun-tries are now threatened by the SS-20 and other missiles, but the deployment of shorter-range and therefore faster missiles in Albania would add one more difficulty to the complex problem of de-terrering threats to the already ill-de-fended region of southeast Europe.

The advantages that the Soviet Union might reap from bringing Albania back into the Warsaw Pact are so evident that the matter must have received close study by the Soviet Defense Council and by the Central Committee. The risk of kindling a very serious crisis with the West has certainly loomed large in such a review. Taking action on Albania might appear to be a very bold decision, on the order of Khrushchev's decision to install missiles in Cuba. The potential bene-fits, though, would probably outweigh the difficulties. Foremost among the lat-ter is the lack of contiguity between Al-bania and Bulgaria: the use of land forces, at least initially, would have to be ruled out. But parachutist and airborne troops might easily capture the Adriatic ports, with a view to sealing up Albania against a possible landing of NATO forces; the airports could also be cap-tured by surprise, and a line of airborne logistical supply established in a rela-tively short time.

I shall not indulge in further war games, at which I am not at all compe-

tent. I shall instead try to draw a possible political scenario for justifying Oper-ation Albania.

IN A SPEECH at the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in New Del-hi, the late Indira Gandhi made an ar-resting pronouncement that her country might well come to regret one day. "It is perfectly in order," she said, "for the government of a country to ask for the help of an allied or brotherly country." What she had in mind, of course, was Afghanistan: she thus tried to legitimize Soviet armed intervention in that un-lucky country, and in one stroke legiti-mized other military aggressions by the Soviet Union against "brotherly" coun-tries, such as Hungary and Czechoslova-kia. It was possibly the best homage to the memory of Leonid Brezhnev, who invented the doctrine of "brotherly aid" that carries his name.

This time-honored doctrine will con-tinue to be the pretext for Soviet mili-tary intervention abroad. A Socialist country is usually described as being about to lose its independence and revo-lutionary heritage owing to the maneu-vers of a gang of traitors to the proletariat in conspiracy with Western imperialists. A few insurgent heroes rise against this hideous plot and ask the Soviet Union to help them defeat it, a request that Mos-cow generously honors, in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism. Moral protests and diplomatic condemnations are scorned as sheer interference in the internal affairs of the Socialist bloc.

In our scenario the Soviet planners have now reached a point where two of the main elements of Operation Albania have passed the test of feasibility: an air-borne expedition against Albania would be a rather minor job for the Soviet army and air force, and a plan to destabilize the men and political groups who inherit power in Tiranë after Hoxha's death could easily be put together. Some small faction that has been denied participa-tion in power could be encouraged to ap-pel to Moscow for brotherly aid. Or, better still, the ruling group itself could defy the opposition by requesting the protection of Big Brother so as to con-tinue ruling in his name. This second possibility might be better, but Soviet political planners might well prefer gen-erating the occasion to waiting for it.

The overriding standard of judgment about Operation Albania has to be the degree of military risk. Not, of course, the risk that the invading army might in-

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cur owing to the resistance of Albanian patriots (there would certainly be few of them at the start, though in time their numbers would probably grow) but the supreme risk of detonating an East-West crisis of major proportions. The men in the Kremlin are willing to take calculated risks: they had correctly reckoned that when the sclerotic Brezhnev gave the green light to the invasion of Afghanistan, there would be no reaction from the West other than verbal, because geography ruled out a Western military intervention of any kind. But Albania is in the Mediterranean area, close to NATO forces. An evaluation of the risk must therefore take into account the possibility of a military reaction from Italy, from Greece, from the U.S. Sixth Fleet, or from NATO as a whole. What kind of reaction should the Kremlin expect from each of these?

Italy's reaction to a Soviet surprise invasion of Albania would range from extreme anxiety among the knowledgeable minority to acute embarrassment in political circles and timorous indifference among the masses. The Italian Foreign Office would rapidly mobilize its diplomats abroad to ascertain how the allied governments evaluated the event and how they intended to react, but Italy's leaders would find it difficult to elaborate a practical proposal to be put to the NATO allies. Italian politicians would not have to worry about the possibility of violent demonstrations by the Communist Party or the trade unions: the prospect of Soviet forces permanently stationed a hundred miles off southern Italy would not fill those organizations with bliss. But the people would be spiritually unprepared to meet force with force, having been kept in the dark about the risk of a confrontation with the USSR in the Balkans (or, for that matter, in North Africa). Rome would therefore stay put, waiting for a lead from Washington and other allied capitals.

Greece's strategic position would change even more radically than Italy's, and the Greek government would be seriously upset. Warsaw Pact pressure, already felt along the Bulgarian border, would now spread to the formerly peaceful Albanian frontier. In the beginning Athens would mold its posture on Belgrade's, and while it would prick up its ears at noises coming from Turkey, it would probably counsel prudence and restraint, putting its confidence in rumors that the Soviet troops would be withdrawn once they had completed

their fraternal duty or that Moscow was about to offer a Soviet-Greek non-aggression treaty.

I have mentioned the U.S. Sixth Fleet because it is the foundation of U.S. power in the Mediterranean. Supported by the Mediterranean NATO countries, and supplied by their ports and airports, the Sixth Fleet is a remarkable engine of war. But whether by itself it could sustain a military operation substantially more meaningful than the two that it carried out in recent years against Qaddafi's Libya must remain open to doubt. Certainly one or two big aircraft carriers could take a position in the Ionian Sea or in the Gulf of Taranto; AWAC planes flying over the Adriatic could gauge the extent of the Soviet penetration. Could such a limited show of force dissuade Moscow from completing its airborne expedition and cause it to call back its Antonov planes and its paratroopers, as Khrushchev called back his ships because of Kennedy's ultimatum? Probably the answer is no, and therefore another step would have to be taken, and the problem put by Washington into NATO's lap.

NATO is of course a convenient cover for what is in reality a juxtaposition of the political will of several sovereign states. Past experience has shown that it is difficult for the organization as such to reach a collective decision that might trigger a large war, unless there is direct aggression against one of its members. For a number of years military advisers have urged the Atlantic alliance to protect not only its member states (which it has done successfully) but also the vital interests of the alliance in areas outside the geographical and juridical limits of NATO (limits that encompass North America, Western Europe with the exception of the neutral and non-aligned countries, and the Mediterranean basin with the exception of the Near East and North Africa). Nothing came of those proposals. The difficulties in defining the vital interests and the areas proved too great. In 1973 the European allied governments, except Portugal, declined to provide air bases and other facilities to American forces engaged in saving the skin of Israel—and, a few days later, that of Egypt. In retrospect, the gutlessness of the West at the time of the Cuban expeditions in Angola (1975) and Ethiopia (1978) proves the stupidity of its leaders as well as the lack of political education of its peoples. The large majority of them blissfully ig-

nored where Luanda and Addis Ababa are and the fact that Cuban "liberators" made it impossible for Angolans and Ethiopians to choose the amity and the aid of the West if they so wanted. It would have been difficult to persuade the electorate in Copenhagen or Amsterdam to countenance a military operation in those "distant countries of which they knew nothing." And though Tiranë and Albania are closer to, say, Norway than to the two African countries mentioned above, the northern members of NATO, among others, would be likely to adopt a concerned attitude but one that stopped short of concrete action.

The debate in the Atlantic Council, in Brussels, would therefore be concluded with pious words, or with the tacit charge to the United States—possibly in conjunction with Italy—to act to the best of its ability, judgment, and political authority to obtain the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Albania. (The unhappy precedent of Afghanistan should be kept in mind but not taken as a pattern. The West had no possibility of access to that region, whereas it is in close physical contact with the Balkans.) Everything would thus be thrown back on the ability of the American President to carry Congress with him, in his attempt to confront the Soviets with a credible posture and program signaling that either. . . or. . . Time would unfortunately be very short, and the planners in Moscow—reviewing the limited choices open to the President—might well conclude that it was already too late for him to instruct the Sixth Fleet and the Rapid Deployment Force to land troops on the Albanian seaboard with a view to ensuring at least some territorial pawns and pre-empting a total occupation of the country by the Soviet Army.

Such a pessimistic evaluation on our side, and such an optimistic one on the opposite side, would be precluded if the U.S. government and NATO Supreme Headquarters had a contingency plan ready, political and military, to manage a crisis of this type and magnitude. Neither this writer nor probably any of his readers is privy to U.S. and NATO secrets. It is known only that the theoretical study of crisis management has progressed considerably in the West. It is dearly to be hoped that precise application of this doctrine is available to manage crises that might occur in certain delicate sectors of the world. Moreover, if it were known or credible that a con-

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tingency plan existed to cope quickly with events like the Albanian scenario I have just described, this would by itself act as a deterrent or at least would introduce doubts into the Soviet leaders which might restrain their hand.

LET US NEVERTHELESS, *à toutes fins utiles*, paint with dark colors events as they might further develop. The sequence now becomes more and more speculative. Every conjecture is predicated on two independent unknown quantities: When will the crisis start? and What will then be the overall ratio of forces in the two camps, particularly in the nuclear field? Let us assume that no nuclear ultimatum is given to demand the withdrawal of Soviet forces; that no foothold on the Albanian territory was seized when circumstances were still favorable; that no Soviet transport plane has been shot down so as to induce Moscow to pause for reflection. The West would still have cards up its sleeves (it would have reached a high degree of readiness; it could sink Soviet warships and transports with no great risk of reprisals; the mounting of a future landing operation would be in progress), but the value of those cards would diminish with the passing of days. After a week or two Soviet order would be established in most of Albania, except the mountainous areas. The Tiranë government would solemnly thank Moscow for its brotherly aid. "Proofs" of the imperialist plot and prisoners purported to have been "subversive commandos" would be produced. The Security Council of the United Nations would vote to condemn the Soviet Union by a slight majority, but the resolution would be nullified by a Soviet veto. Well-disposed or simply naive journalists of the Western world would periodically spread the news that Soviet troops were about to embark in Durrës to return home. Official Moscow sources would now and then promise an end to the occupation. Some army units might even be withdrawn. Gradually, however, naval and air bases would receive Russian "advisers"; eventually U.S. reconnaissance satellites would discover missile silos in the process of being built on the Albanian hills. Americans would vigorously protest in Moscow. They would receive the answer that there are no mutually agreed-upon limits or constraints to the deployment by either of the two blocs of intermediate nuclear weapons, and that in any case short-range nuclear missiles

in Albania were meant to make up for Cruise missiles deployed in Sicily.

The profound change in the strategic situation in the Balkans and the Mediterranean sector would not stop with the deployment of short-range missiles aimed at most of Italy, Yugoslavia, and Greece. There would be a cascade of political consequences that do not need much fantasy to be imagined. After some time the question of Macedonia would be raised; incidents and riots would be encouraged in the Yugoslav Macedonian Republic, and these would be followed by military maneuvers all along the borders of Yugoslavia under the high command of the Warsaw Pact. No concrete aid would be forthcoming from the non-aligned countries or from NATO. It would make no difference which formula was adopted, an "independent" Macedonia or a Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation (a 1947 invention of Georgi Dimitrov, which Stalin vetoed for his own reasons). Safe overland lines of communication and transport between Bulgaria and Albania would, in some way, be established and maintained.

While putting Macedonia to good use, the Kremlin would move the other half of the pincers, Kosovo, to squeeze further concessions from Yugoslavia. In return for Soviet restraint of uprisings of the Albanian minority, Belgrade would be requested to open its naval and air bases to the Soviet forces. This *do ut des* would be heartily supported by Serbian chauvinists, because it would save the Serbian minority in Kosovo from being expelled from the land where it has lived since the Middle Ages. By now the rope would be firmly around Yugoslavia's neck, and the end of its non-alignment would be in sight. Thus the whole of the Balkans would have become part of the Eastern empire led by Moscow. Greece and perhaps Turkey might find it advisable to search for some accommodation with it, and would probably withdraw from NATO and declare neutrality.

What should this writer, who is an Italian, prophesy about the political repercussions in his own country of this theoretical sequence of events? Once the rape of Albania had been consummated, there would probably be a political swing toward resistance and preparedness. Some political parties that had been uneasy about the presence of Cruise missiles in Sicily would insist that they be deployed—on the condition, however, that some or all of the missiles were targeted upon the Soviet silos in

Albania. Other groups, on the contrary, would ask that negotiations with the Soviets be opened immediately regarding the simultaneous withdrawal of nuclear missiles from Albania and Sicily. Voices would be more frequently heard—among them, the enthusiastic voice of Mr. Mintoff, from Malta—in favor of making the Mediterranean a nuclear-free zone. A deep silence in Israel and in Libya would kill that suggestion for the time being.

The Yugoslav crisis, coming after the Albanian coup, would visibly preoccupy responsible circles in Italy, while leaving the common people largely indifferent. Isn't Yugoslavia a more or less artificial creation? And aren't the Macedonian people mostly Bulgarians? But once Yugoslavia fell under Soviet influence, there would be a rapid change both in political circles and among the better-informed members of the public. The consequences would be serious.

Which image of Europe would in fact be present in the eyes of sensible observers in the Peninsula? For more than a third of a century Italy's security and its parliamentary democracy have been preserved by the Atlantic alliance as well as by slow progress toward European unification. No prompt decision, no courageous move, would, however, have come from NATO or from the EEC in the Albanian-Yugoslav crisis. The whole eastern flank of Italy, from Trieste to Syracuse, would stand exposed and barely defensible. If the pseudo-neutrality of Greece and the pact of mutual assistance between Libya and the USSR were taken into account along with the presence of Soviet forces on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, the arc of potentially hostile nations encircling Italy would weigh somberly on its future. Could the U.S. Sixth Fleet continue to be based in Gaeta and Maddalena or would it seek calmer waters farther west? And would lines of communication with the Suez Canal remain secure, once Egypt began feeling itself cut off from the center of Western power?

The next scene could be embroidered differently by different novelists. The middle-of-the-road chiefs of the Italian Communist Party would be ejected and replaced by people closer to Moscow. Neutralist temptations would be rising in the Socialist Party and in the left wing of the Catholic Party, and they would not lack for rationalization from radical intellectuals. To salvage what might still be salvaged, cool heads and prudent

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hands would start charting a new course, away from the alliance and the EEC, toward the non-aligned world.

We may safely stop here: history is not a mathematical theorem, though it often resembles one. I personally would prefer to have recourse in conclusion to quotations from three great men.

The first is from Paul-Henri Spaak: "Who wills certain things also wills their consequences: if he does not like the consequences he should oppose the things from which they originate."

The second is what the wise Chou En-lai told his NATO visitors (including the Italian Foreign Minister Giacomo Medici and this author) at the beginning of the seventies, which can be summarized as follows: "The Soviets will not attack you in the German plains: they will hypnotize your mind and soul with that menace. They will then be free to carry out a strategy of successive wide-range encirclements of Europe. The first, through Angola and Mozambique, will threaten your supply lines with the Eastern Hemisphere. A second ring will then be established, foreclosing the West from the Ethiopian high plateau, Aden, and Afghanistan, and possibly Iran and the Persian Gulf. Your influence on India will be reduced very close to zero; Pakistan will find itself in a difficult situation. While cashing in on all that, the Soviet leaders will begin to construct a third encircling ring. This time they will aim at putting under their control the Balkan peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean. If that happens, the West as we know it will be finished. Shortly before that happens you will witness an improvement in Soviet-Chinese relations: slow and cautious, but irresistible. You will remember that we never liked Stalin, but neither did we object to his pact with Hitler. The survival of his people is the first responsibility of a leader. Later on, the struggle may be resumed under better conditions."

The third quotation is from Dante: "*Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda*," a little spark may cause a great fire. It could be an appropriate conclusion to a meditation on the future of Albania.

—Roberto Ducci

Roberto Ducci was for most of his life a diplomat, concluding his career as the Italian ambassador to London (1975–1980). He is the author of several books, a contributor to many newspapers (including The Times of London), and the editor of the Italian monthly cultural magazine Tempo Presente.



FRANCE

TROUBLE ON THE RIGHT

Recent gains by the extreme-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen have left conservatives and moderates confused about whether to imitate or attack him

DEPUTIES TO THE European Parliament, an assembly of representatives from the ten Common Market countries, wield little power at home; nevertheless, the election last summer of the eighty-one-member delegation from France changed the French political landscape. The tallies established Jean-Marie Le Pen, the head of the far-rightist National Front, as the fastest-rising political figure in the country. Le Pen devoted his campaign to attacking two targets: the presence in France of four million immigrants, especially the 1.5 million Arabs among them; and the political influence of the Communists, which he insisted was pervasive not only in the Socialist government headed by François Mitterrand but also among the Gaullists and moderates who governed France for most of the Fifth Republic's twenty-six years. Le Pen received 2.2 million votes, 11 percent of the total, and his party took ten seats in the European Parliament. This result put an end to more than twenty years of obscurity

for Le Pen, during which sometimes violent squabbles among a clutch of tiny extreme-right factions had occupied most of his energy.

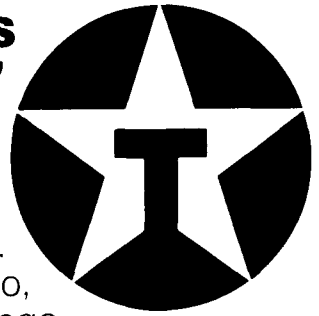
Le Pen's success highlighted a dramatic tilt to the right that has transformed the political mood since the election of the Socialists in 1981, when Mitterrand's party, which called itself "the Tranquil Force," took office on a wave of quasi-revolutionary euphoria. Since then the left has lost every round of local and regional elections, largely because of anger over economic conditions: nearly 2.4 million French, 9.5 percent of the work force, are jobless. In the European Parliament election the Socialist and Communist slates together received only 32 percent of the vote, a low-water mark for any modern French government in power. The Communist Party lost almost half the electoral support it had had in 1979, in its worst showing in more than fifty years. The Communists, who have had a reputation as the best-organized voting bloc in France, barely outpolled the National Front, which in 1981 had been unable to muster even the 500 signatures needed to put Le Pen on the presidential ballot.

Le Pen's unexpected popularity emphasized the public's sullen rejection of the Socialists' agenda and placed his themes at the center of political debate: plans to deport foreigners by the thousands, calls to form groups to defend the "indigenous" French against crime, and accusations that the left was "sliding toward fascism." Some members of the moderate and conservative opposition have even laid claim to elements of Le Pen's ideology in order to win back his voters as their own in the 1986 National Assembly elections.

FOR THE FIRST time since the 1960s the extreme right broke out of its marginal role within the structures of the moderate and conservative parties. During the campaign opposition leaders such as Jacques Chirac, the mayor of Paris and the head of the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) Party, and former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, of the Union for French Democracy (UDF) coalition, found themselves being challenged on issues—crime, the status of foreigners—that they had themselves used (as had a number of leftist politicians). Le Pen brought fear and prejudice to the surface with a verbally aggressive style rarely heard in French politics since the Second World

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War. "Tomorrow, if you don't stay on guard," he said of the immigrants early in the campaign, "they will install themselves at your place, eat your soup, and sleep with your wife, your daughter, . . . or your son." A mocking manner and the haberdashery of a banker—a reflection of the wealth willed to him by a National Front supporter in 1976—have helped make him France's newest media personality.

Using the slogan "the French first," Le Pen promotes a vision of France largely free of foreigners. He has said that if the illegal residents were rounded up, the immigrant population would decline by as much as 80 percent, although the government has estimated that illegals number between three and ten percent of the total. The cost of deporting them, Le Pen has suggested, could be deducted from trade credits extended to their countries of origin. Le Pen also advocates creating separate retirement and unemployment funds for foreigners and denying their French-born children the possibility of citizenship, proposals similar to legislation imposed by the Vichy regime during the Second World War. "When you say, 'The immigrants are going to stay,' people know it's true but they don't want to hear it," says Françoise Gaspard, the Socialist ex-mayor of Dreux, sixty miles west of Paris. She lost that office in 1983 to a conservative alliance that included the National Front, which had won 17 percent of the first-round vote, and the RPR.

Voters for Le Pen in the European elections were from diverse political and economic backgrounds, but they exhibited at least one common trait: they ranked immigration and crime as the most important problems, and the economy as the least important—exactly reversing the priorities expressed by supporters of nearly every other slate. Le Pen won more than one out of six voters in France's thirty-six largest cities, with an especially strong showing among self-employed and white-collar workers. Nearly 30 percent of his supporters had voted Socialist in 1981—an emphatic desertion by the swing voters who had made Mitterrand's election possible.

While attacking the supposed surplus of immigrants in France, Le Pen argues that France is underpopulated, at least by those of European stock. Decrying the country's declining birth rate as a "mortal menace," he criticizes the relaxation of abortion laws under Giscard, in 1975, focusing responsibility on Simone

Veil, then the health minister. Veil, who is Jewish and a survivor of Auschwitz, headed the mainstream opposition's unified ticket in the European elections. In campaign attacks on Veil as a perpetrator of "anti-French genocide," Le Pen demonstrated the talent for well-crafted innuendo that is at the core of his success. Some of his allies are less circumspect. One of the newly elected National Front deputies to the European Parliament, which meets at Strasbourg, faced indictment for inciting racial hatred against Jews during a "day of French friendship" before the campaign began.

In his call for a society of "moral order" and strict authority Le Pen echoes themes that the French extreme right has used repeatedly. As long ago as the 1870s, following the fall of the Paris Commune, Marshal Edmé Mac-Mahon, a monarchist, tried to portray pro-republicans as intolerable enemies of the state, and in the 1880s General Georges Boulanger used suspicion of an international conspiracy of freemasons to fuel popular sentiment against the Third Republic. Le Pen, although he doesn't advocate overthrow of French political institutions, has denounced French leaders of the past thirty years (especially De Gaulle, for granting Algerian independence) as cowardly, corrupt, and weak, and he has complained of their "using the votes of the right to carry out the politics of the left." Like Charles Maurras, a turn-of-the-century anti-Semitic theoretician who argued against purely racial hatred of Jews but insisted that they were a threat to French political and economic independence, Le Pen often raises the specter of "powerful foreign minorities." In this case, however, he means Arabs, who, he warns, could act as a seditious force if aroused by a Khomeini or a Qaddafi.

Le Pen's first political success came in 1956, when he was elected to the National Assembly as a supporter of Pierre Poujade, whose conservative constituency—mostly shopkeepers and artisans—had been angered by an economic downturn, an unfavorable tax structure, and an increase in the role of government in their lives. As a paratrooper in the Foreign Legion during the Algerian War, Le Pen became a sympathizer of the Secret Army Organization, or OAS, a group of French military men who led a clandestine campaign to reverse the decision to withdraw from Algeria, though he never joined the illegal

plotting. When the general strike of May, 1968, ended the deep hostility between the traditional right and the extreme right, many former OAS supporters found political roles in the Gaullist camp. Le Pen, however, joined the tiny fringe who rejected compromise with Chirac or Giscard.

In 1968 Le Pen was convicted of "apologizing for war crimes," a misdemeanor under French law. In liner notes to a recording of songs and speeches of the Nazi era he had characterized Hitler's rise as the result of "a powerful mass movement finally popular and democratic." Le Pen, who insists that he is neither racist nor anti-Semitic, has claimed that the charge was a Communist-inspired distortion of his work as a publisher of historical records and tapes. Stung by the conviction, which carried only a minimal fine but branded him a neo-Nazi, Le Pen learned about the political use of French libel laws. In the course of his recent campaign he successfully sued more than twenty journalists and political opponents, including the newspaper *Le Monde*, national-television reporters, the Communist Party chief Georges Marchais, and leaders of the country's foremost anti-racism groups, for asserting without legal proof that he was racist, fascist, or anti-Semitic.

All of Le Pen's adversaries, in fact, have had difficulty finding effective ways to oppose him. His ridiculing of "the Gang of Four"—the major parties—touched a popular disenchantment with the familiar political figures, and his own vocabulary became acceptable in political discourse. Leftist street demonstrations often turned into brawls with the police or with young Le Pen supporters, allowing Le Pen to attack the "extremists" who were against him. Socialist leaders, who believed Le Pen to be a dangerous if "banal" reincarnation of France's historical racism, tried to tar their Gaullist parliamentary opposition with the same brush and to mobilize voters with the fifty-year-old theme "Fascism shall not pass." When it came time to confront Le Pen face-to-face, however, the Socialists were at a loss. Jean Poperen, a prominent Socialist, walked off the stage—on national television—rather than debate Le Pen, with the justification that his themes didn't merit discussion. Le Pen scorned the left's refusal to debate as "anti-democratic." In any case, the Socialists' tactics did little to slow Le Pen's rise, perhaps

TV's Unfulfilled Promise

The following are excerpts from a speech given by Harry J. Gray, chairman and chief executive officer of United Technologies, at a conference on science and the media, sponsored by the Annenberg School of Communications. For a copy of the entire speech, please write: Op-Ed, United Technologies Corporation, Hartford, Connecticut 06101.

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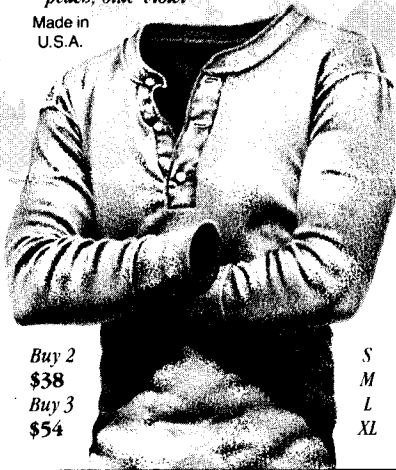
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in part because "people didn't know what was meant by the word 'fascism,'" according to Gaspard, the ex-mayor of Dreux, who is still a member of the National Assembly. "When it was said to them, it evoked nothing."

LE PEN HAS brought a more immediate crisis of strategy to the moderates and conservatives. The mainstream right—the centrist and moderate UDF coalition of Giscard and Raymond Barre, his former prime minister, plus Chirac's RPR Party—found itself winning local and regional by-elections with increasingly solid majorities only a few months after its loss of power to the left in 1981, the first such defeat in nearly twenty-five years. But its unity is imperiled by rivalry among its three top leaders for the 1988 presidential nomination. The right has not been able to define a clear program, a task that has traditionally concerned it less than simply managing institutions. Last summer the right lost one of its most useful targets when the Communists in the cabinet resigned to protest the economic austerity of Laurent Fabius, the newly named prime minister.

For the European elections, however, Chirac set out to bring the right together, at least temporarily, and to soften his own hard-line image in preparation for the 1988 presidential race. Despite reluctance in Giscard's coalition, Chirac managed to force agreement on a unified opposition ticket, headed by Veil, one of the most popular centrist figures in France. Learning of that choice at the beginning of the campaign, Le Pen exclaimed, "If they only knew what a gift they were giving me!" As the campaign progressed, Le Pen increasingly focused his criticism on Veil as "a woman of the left," and though her ticket received 43 percent of the vote, Le Pen denied her the outright majority she had hoped for. Unlike most Fifth Republic elections, the European contest had no second round in which the leaders could assemble a winning margin from other camps.

As a result, some leaders on the right have argued for a national alliance with the National Front, like the one the RPR made in Dreux. Others have begun to voice Le Pen-like themes. Various figures from both the UDF and the RPR have, for example, lamented the declining birth rate among the French, announced plans to move immigrants out of certain localities, and supported

the formation of local "security committees" to fight crime. Others, Veil among them, have refused to consider any alliance with Le Pen's forces and have urged the disavowal of his programs.

Members of both the RPR and the UDF have intensified their attacks on the "legitimacy" of the left's government, though they have stopped short of questioning its actual legality. Insisting that the left lost the authority of its mandate because of successive electoral losses, a chorus of conservatives, led by Chirac, has demanded the immediate dissolution of the National Assembly, where the Socialists hold a majority. Conservatives have also tried to shut down all activity in both the National Assembly and the Senate rather than allow action on controversial Socialist proposals, notably a proposal to increase state supervision of France's private schools, which receive public funds. One sixth of France's schoolchildren go to private schools, most of which are Roman Catholic.

In June a million people demonstrated in Paris against the school plan as a threat to parents' freedom of choice in how to educate their children. The "free school" leaders, including the church hierarchy, sought to revise the Socialists' proposal. The rightist parliamentary opposition mounted a much broader campaign against the government as "the enemy of personal liberty" and the builder of the Leviathan state. The right then insisted on a national referendum, making it clear that they expected Mitterrand to resign if, as seemed probable, his plan lost. After Mitterrand withdrew it, the conservative-dominated Senate refused to allow him to sponsor his own referendum on a constitutional amendment that would permit more such votes on issues of personal freedom. The result, as the centrist magazine *L'Express* put it, was a "climate of verbal civil war."

However useful in thwarting Mitterrand, these skirmishes have not helped the conservatives in their effort toward campaigning for the 1986 National Assembly election under the politically fashionable banner of "liberalism"—which in France means strict laissez-faire capitalism as well as a social philosophy of free choice. Free-market economics has recently become popular among the French, who regard with awe the creation of six million new jobs in the United States under the Reagan Administration. The French have lost some

500,000 jobs in the same period. French conservatives have suddenly discovered the work of the Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek, whose theories on the need for less government planning and reduced social-benefit programs, first published in the 1930s, became popular among their American counterparts twenty years ago. French theoreticians have begun to debate how far to take denationalization of state-run businesses—not only the thirty-six banks and five major industrial firms nationalized by Mitterrand but also traditionally public institutions such as the national railways, Air France, the national health system, and the national electric utility. Their agenda is similar to that of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Such a program runs contrary to the instincts and practices of the French right, in the past rarely averse to big government so long as it was in power. Since the reign of Louis XIV, who personally controlled the largest enterprises of his day, the French have expected the state to keep a guiding hand on major economic matters as part of its duty. Chirac, for example, who has been especially active in efforts to emphasize privatization in the RPR platform, has never objected to the national government's 3.6-billion-franc (\$395 million) annual subsidy of his city's Métro, nor does he show any disposition to decentralize the city administration. Since the Second World War, French conservatives have played an important role in the government domination of the telecommunications industry, 60 percent of which is now publicly owned, and the founding of the state-run aerospace company SNIAS, the builder of the Concorde and the Airbus commercial aircraft, which grosses 11 billion francs a year. "When you talk about the primacy of the market, you are a dissenter from most opinion on the right," complains one Paris-based management consultant.

IN TRYING TO flesh out "liberalism" from an attractive idea to a meaningful program, Chirac and other conservatives found themselves in a surprising contest with the Socialists over who could more energetically support the virtues of private enterprise. Although the Socialists took office in 1981 with an aggressive program of nationalization and increased state spending, fifteen months later they began to cut subsidies for ailing state-run industries such as ship-

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building and steel and they rejected further nationalization. Last summer the government chose to let Creusot-Loire, the nation's largest heavy-machinery maker, with 23,000 employees, go bankrupt rather than subsidize it. The right, supported by major business leaders, demanded a government rescue grant of \$350 million. "Sometimes the left is more 'liberal' than the right," admits Guy Sorman, a political scientist whose book *The Conservative American Revolution* became a best seller.

The Socialists' embrace of the notion that enterprise creates wealth, as Mitterrand put it recently, and their inability to keep their electoral promise to protect existing jobs at all costs have shocked much of the left's electoral base. But French intellectuals on the left, who from the time of the Dreyfus case, in 1898, to the general strike of 1968 sponsored a nearly continuous stream of petitions and declarations on pressing social issues, have been notably silent on the Socialists' change of doctrine. Solzhenitsyn's account of the gulag and news of massacres in Cambodia led the intelligentsia to repudiate Marxist orthodoxy en masse in the late 1970s, and it has remained distant from the Mitterrand regime. The tenaciously Stalinist French Communist Party's three years of participation in the government, and the government's presumption that intellectuals would automatically justify official actions, have made this detachment more pronounced.

Some prominent French intellectuals have in recent years adopted positions at odds with much leftist thinking. André Glucksmann, for example, the writer and philosopher, who was a leader of the 1968 movement, conceived of his recent book, *The Force of Vertigo*, as a rebuttal to American arguments for a nuclear freeze. Asserting the necessity of nuclear deterrence by the West and decrying the rise of pacifism among the Germans, Glucksmann labeled accommodation of the Russians—of which Giscard was a strong proponent—"Pétainist." Other leftist intellectuals, including the economist François de Closets, have criticized French workers' expectations of "always more" benefits, privileges, and material ease, cautioning that it may be necessary in the future to make do with less.

At the same time, most intellectuals still refuse to be identified with the right. "There isn't much great thinking on the right," says Glucksmann, who



considers the French conservatives' fascination with the "errors" of too much state influence and social welfare to be "embarrassing." The quadrupling of real living standards in the thirty years after the Second World War cannot have occurred by error, he insists. Although Glucksmann sees the battle against Soviet totalitarianism as consistent with the left's ideals, many other members of the "haut intelligentsia"—university professors and writers—seem stranded between disavowal of Marxism and their established distaste for the European right's defense of class and narrow privilege.

A group of self-proclaimed conservative thinkers have taken on the mission of contesting what they see as the cultural domination of left-wing ideology and creating a "bank" of ideas for the right. Some, among them Sorman—whose account of the American right not only lucidly describes its rise but also asserts its final victory—strongly advocate a reduction in state spending and an increase in privatization, an agenda that Sorman concedes may run contrary to the French political reflex to look to the government for solutions. "The French aren't going to rally to 'liberalism' because they believe in the superiority of person over state but because it brings them something," he says. The theoreticians, many of whom belong to the Club de l'Horloge and other political debating societies, hope to draw up concrete proposals—the use of private management to rescue the financially ailing

national health system, for example—that will promote their view of society, as well as translate into a political victory in 1986.

However, this Reaganomics *à la française* is by no means popular among all parts of the right. What is called the New Right in France consists of a small group of thinkers who reject the fashion for "liberalism" and its insistence on the freedom of the market. This New Right, which was founded in 1968 by a conservative group of journalists, academics, and civil servants, has aimed at reshaping cultural values rather than winning elections. It promotes a "fundamental critique of egalitarianism," according to Alain de Benoist, a central ideologue of the New Right. Opposing the "totalitarian mystique" of Western democracy, the New Right upholds the preservation of traditional cultures and "collective identities," glamorizing particularly the Nordic, pre-Christian roots of Europe.

Although Benoist has dissociated himself from Le Pen's anti-immigrant rhetoric, he also has attacked the "homogenization" of multiracial industrialized societies, the worst example of which, in his view, is the United States. Benoist argues instead for a "differentialism" that would preserve traditional cultures as well as the genetic integrity of distinct populations—a "scientific" posture adapted from such sources as the zoologist Konrad Lorenz and the anthropologist Georges Dumézil. Unlike Le Pen, the New Right has acquired a certain intellectual cachet and an image of moderation. And, far from reviling De Gaulle, as Le Pen does, the New Right reveres De Gaulle's detachment from the Atlantic alliance, his incarnation of nationhood, and his "grand design" for France, which together suggest a leadership model that Benoist would like some future pan-European "empire" to follow. Distasteful as the New Right may find Le Pen, its "cultural combat" against egalitarian democracy and multi-ethnic society over the past fifteen years has surely helped him, by popularizing ideas that have increased the extreme right's appeal and put pressure on the traditional right to accommodate the extremists once again.

NEVERTHELESS, MANY French politicians of both the left and the right believe that Le Pen's latest career will be short-lived, like the career of his mentor, Pierre Poujade. Just two years

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after the Poujadists sent fifty-two deputies to the National Assembly, in 1956—with 2.5 million votes, 11.6 percent of the total, numbers that nearly match Le Pen's tally last June—fully four fifths of their voters deserted the cause in order to support De Gaulle's return to political power. Le Pen's voting bloc—an amalgam of dedicated extreme-rightists, disillusioned swing voters, and conservatives protesting Veil's too-moderate presence on their ticket—may prove to be no more stable. The conditions and sentiments that gave Le Pen his support are deeply enmeshed in current French society, however, and are not likely to vanish any time soon.

In the short run the National Front's future may be determined in large measure by Mitterrand, who has pledged to revise the electoral law before the 1986 National Assembly elections. The present law, fashioned by De Gaulle in 1958, requires a runoff in races in which there is no absolute majority on the first round, a system that accentuates shifts in the voters' opinions and weakens splinter parties. Although this mechanism favored the Socialists' rise in 1981, turning its 38 percent of the vote into a 58 percent majority in the National Assembly, the left has traditionally opposed the Gaullist voting plan that deprived it of power for decades. Mitterrand, faced with a strong conservative opposition that may well take control of the National Assembly while he remains in power, may opt for a return to a proportional system like that in effect during the Fourth Republic—and for the European elections. Such proportional voting, which distributes seats according to the national tally, might well reintroduce the endlessly shifting parliamentary coalitions that plagued France during the 1950s but might also give Mitterrand, a consummate coalition-assembler in that era, room to maneuver with centrist potential allies. Or it might, as Le Pen hopes, leave the National Front with enough support to put a conservative majority in control of the National Assembly. Such an outcome—and the predictably fierce combat over what kind of deal to strike with Le Pen—could shatter existing political alliances and even call into question the future of the formerly unshakable institutions of the Fifth Republic.

—Daniel Cohen

Daniel Cohen is a freelance writer and photographer in New York.

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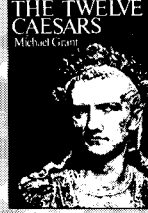
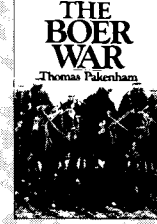
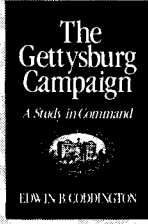
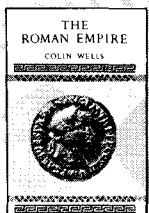
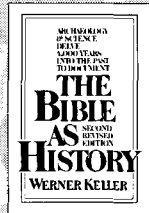
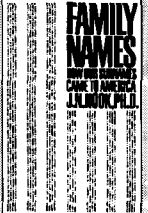
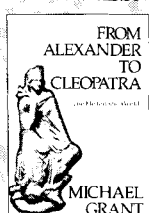
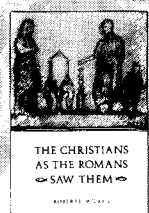
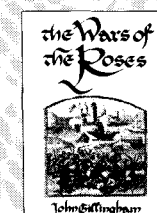
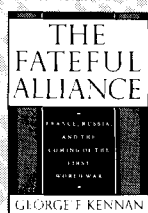
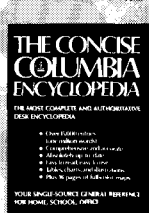
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SALUTE TO JOHN WAYNE

BY ROY BLOUNT, JR.

A FEW YEARS AGO, before nakedness became old hat, I was standing near Times Square looking at an opaque storefront behind which, according to a boldly lettered sign, you could talk to a nude woman. It wasn't the kind of thing I would do, but I stood there wondering what it would be like, what I would say to her, whether she would feel obliged to respond.

As I began to move on, I found myself surrounded by green arms: an Army colonel and a staff sergeant materialized, passed each other and me at the same time, and exchanged crisp salutes.

Although these two may have been the only servicemen in the entire mid-town area, their eyes did not meet. You can tell by looking at a person's eyes whether they are meeting someone else's. Both men were in fact angling their attention toward the TALK TO A NUDE WOMAN sign, but at any rate each of them addressed himself, quite properly, to the uniform, not the man.

I sensed an epiphany, or at least a *déjà vu*. Except that there seemed to be an element missing. I turned back to the storefront. What if the woman were actually quite good company: hearty, secure, at peace, her skin tautly billowy like a flag?

Still, you might be at some pains to give her the impression that so far as you were concerned, she was not the only fish in the sea. And she might want to convey that although you might be with a large accounting firm, and her own occupation was being talked to nude, she was not your bit of fluff.

It hit me. What was missing.

Then she came out, slightly but not unfetchingly cross-eyed, and wearing—something loose. I can never, except where they are revealing, describe women's clothes. But hers reminded me of the time in seventh grade when I showed up at my girlfriend Amy's house unexpectedly the afternoon before a Methodist hayride I was taking her to and she seemed more domestic than she did at school. She smelled of hand lotion, something I did not understand the appeal of. Her hair was wet, and she was

wearing the kind of flapabout clothes one's mother wore while giving herself a home permanent. Then, through fabric, I descried the unsegmented line of Amy's whole flank. I didn't recall having seen that line, moving and unbroken by band or ruffle, before.

Amy, flustered, offered me a Coke. While she was getting it, I sat down. Her orange-and-white cat jumped into my lap and started kneading my crotch in an



embarrassing way. I half-stood, but the cat clung. I pulled at the cat, the cat sank its claws into me, and I was hopping, hunched, trying to wrangle the cat loose when Amy came in with my Coke.

"Mister Fluff!" she cried, and her eyes filled with tears.

Well, that was the element. When this nude woman in mufti came out of the storefront, she was carrying a plush but alert-looking gray cat. You know how hard it is to pin down a cat's focus, but this one gave me a look, I thought, as his mistress went pitter-pat on high heels right by me, sprang into a taxi, and was gone.

Did she hold the cat, stroking it, in her lap or at her bosom, as she was being

talked to? Did she let visitors touch it? Certain visitors? When I am trying to concentrate on something, cats drive me crazy, and yet I am drawn to them. To pet the cat of a not unfetching woman who is tangibly unavailable, as she watches, I imagine would be exciting but not salutary.

Associations were gathering quickly now. The salutes by which I had just been bracketed were the first I had seen in some time. They took me back to the mid-sixties, when nudity and anti-militarism were growing rampant among the young, and I was a callow, married Army lieutenant. Other twenty-three-year-old Americans were daubing "Peace" and "Love" on their foreheads and filling the picture magazines with Human Be-Ins. I had grown up imprinted with sentiments like "Do your bit" and "If you must talk to a nude woman, start a family."

What adults did, I had gathered, was marry, for life; Paul had told the Corinthians that it was better to marry than to burn. I had been burning since the seventh grade. So I married. And suddenly the conscience of America was single, anti-grownup, and running around naked at Make Love Not War rallies.

THESE YOUTHS MUST have come along a few years too late to be affected, as I had been in 1949 at the age of eight, by *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, in which John Wayne plays a sergeant who turns raw recruits into fighting men. Since I was palpably raw, and I loved playing gun battle, and John Wayne was John Wayne, that movie struck me with the force of an imperative.

Looking at it today, you might think that *The Sands of Iwo Jima* would put a decent-minded boy off warfare, since it features the broiling of what John Wayne calls "little lemon-colored characters" in pillboxes. But you don't have the feeling that John Wayne enjoys that kind of thing. The movie's great theme is the difficulty of getting through to people.

Wayne keeps trying to strike a rapport with John Agar, who plays a raw recruit whose father, a legendary colonel, was killed in action. Wayne's own son (from whom he is now estranged) is named after Agar's father, under whom Wayne

Roy Blount, Jr., is a contributing editor of The Atlantic.

once served. Agar, for his part, is bitter toward his father, who regarded Agar as "too soft." At mail call Agar learns of the birth of *his* son. When Wayne tries to congratulate him, Agar tells Wayne, coldly, pointedly, "I won't insist that he read the Marine Corps manual. Instead I'll get him a set of Shakespeare."

Wayne's eyes narrow, but with feeling. "I've tried every approach to you that I know, and got nowhere," he tells Agar. Eventually the two of them become close, after Agar saves Wayne's life by dispatching an impending Asian with an entrenching tool. Agar says, "There's something I've been trying to say, but I just can't seem to find the words."

Wayne says, "You mean you been to two universities and still can't find the words to say you been out of line?"

Then we see Wayne get killed by a sniper, and the famous flag-raising scene. Inside Wayne's shirt Agar finds a letter to Wayne's son that says, "Always do what your heart tells you is right."

I don't say, even in retrospect, that this is bad advice. But it doesn't clear up the obliqueness in *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, which I never quite got out of my system. Furthermore, the notion that becoming a fighting man was profoundly connected with adulthood stuck with me, through two universities, all the way up until I entered the Army. It was ROTC camp that took the pleasure out of weapons for me. To get our attention, one Korea-vet instructor went *fwooof* with a flamethrower and said, "Presto! Chinese hamburger!" By then I was already sworn in.

I embarked upon two years of bureaucratic lieutenantcy. The Vietnam buildup began. I was unable to see the point of burning villages in order to save them. I *could* see a certain appeal, for a guy my age, in friendly nude anarchy. I was living in married-junior-officer quarters and exchanging salutes.

When saluted by young men who had the good taste to be not only disaffected soldiers, like me, but also uncommissioned, I felt what is known as role strain. And they knew it. Once I fell from a bicycle in front of a leaf-raking detail—three stockade prisoners whose sudden salute I tried to return while pedaling, balancing, and holding on to some papers. I and the papers fell into the leaves. The prisoners remained at attention. "Let's all desert!" I felt like saying, but I was in no position to.

What you were supposed to say when you ran into a knot of enlisted men who

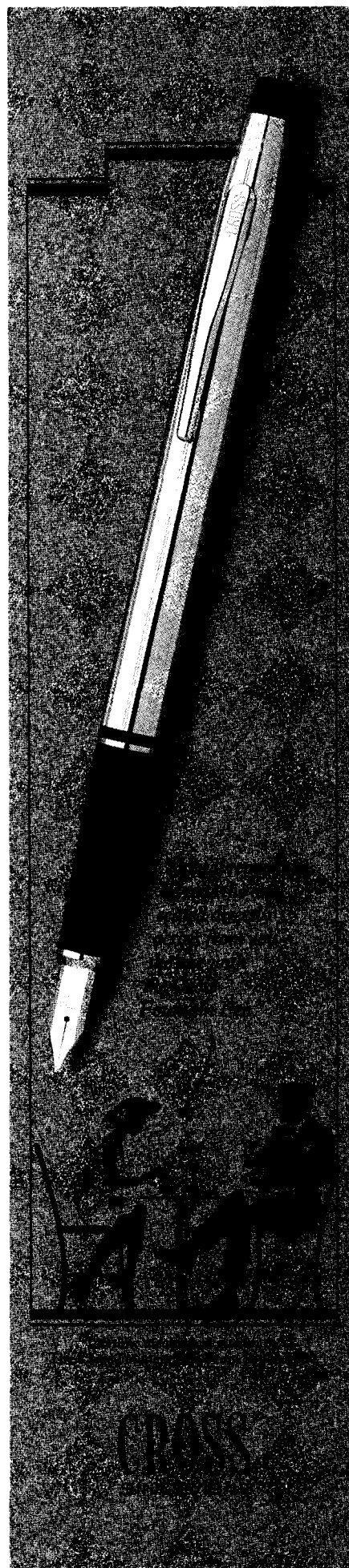
were engaged in the accomplishment of their mission was "Carry on." I didn't like the sound of it. Even when not climbing out of a pile of leaves, I tried to give "Carry on" a tongue-in-cheek twist, but then it seemed to imply too racy an authorization. What if some specialist 4, caught body-painting a general's daughter, were to exclaim, "But this lieutenant said I was to carry on"?

What really bothered me, though, was being saluted by a topkick or a sergeant major who looked as if he might have served with John Wayne at Iwo Jima. Clear as it was to me that the Army at the upper levels did not know what it was doing, it was just as clear that this sergeant was my superior in years, training, job responsibility, and devotion to duty. He would signal himself officially beneath me with a salute snappy enough to cut ice, a salute that, however, leaned over backward not to contain any hint of "You mooncalf, sir." I tried to develop a *wry* return-of-salute, but that is difficult.

I was myself required, of course, to salute superior officers—not as an oppressed person, which would have fit my mood, but as an accomplice. Here I showed some sixties spirit. Once, I saluted a major who was using one hand to take a last drag on a cigarette and the other to hold his hat on against the wind. A colonel would just have nodded, but this major, a young one, lost his hat and bit through his cigarette. Even a full bird colonel could be made to feel over-acknowledged, I found, if saluted from fifty yards away, or while he was playing golf, or while the saluter was having a tooth filled.

A general, on the other hand, could not be made to feel that he was being shown undue respect. A general could seldom be made to feel that he was being shown anything. On Governors Island, New York, where I was stationed for a year, it was my good fortune never to serve as officer of the day, in charge of emergencies. A friend of mine named Swardlow drew that duty on the day of the big blackout of 1965, when electrical power went out all over New York City and its environs. Governors Island lies just below the downtown tip of Manhattan. Swardlow looked out his window, saw the Wall Street skyline go dark, and immediately heard the phone ring. "Brief me," said the voice of a general.

Swardlow was at a loss. "We still have phone communications, sir," was all he



could think to say. The general was outraged.

In saluting a general the trick was to wait, perhaps humming tunelessly as he bore down, until the last split second before he could legitimately bring you up on charges of ignoring him. Since a general didn't want to admit the possibility that it would enter into anyone's mind to ignore him, you had a certain amount of slack to work with. It was bracing to feel that you had frustrated a general for even a moment.

You could also say to a general, "Good morning, sir," quite confidently, at, say, 1900 hours. I found that a general so addressed would never exclaim, "Good God, Lieutenant, it's getting dark!" If some general had, I could have looked at him blankly and said, "Yes, sir," and I doubt he could have made a case stand up against me in any proper court-martial.

THAT'S THE WAY I handled generals at Governors Island, where in those days (the Coast Guard has it now) First Army Headquarters was based. Because so many generals came and went there, and because I never had to brief any of them, their effect was like that of Norse gods on someone raised a Methodist: entertaining. For the second half of my tour, however, I was transferred to Fort Totten, New York, in Queens, where there was only one general. He was often alluded to as The General. He gave the impression from a distance of being that uncommon sort of officer who could have made it as a sergeant if he'd wanted to. I developed a fear that he would enter into my life.

It was at Fort Totten that Emmy, a white cat, came through our kitchen window one day fully grown: a sizable, fleecy, impure but robust Persian, fluffy even to the bottoms of her feet. No one could say where she had come from. She took up with us, and soon became widely known on the post for all the things she was seen chasing. "If it moves, run it up the flagpole" was her attitude.

There was a pheasant whose periodic appearances from out of the woods bordering Fort Totten made him something of a post institution; Emmy chased him through a softball game. The paper girl, collecting at our door one evening, looked over at Emmy admiringly and said, "She chases all the *doongs*." A captain's wife reported having seen Emmy scooping something up out of Little Neck Bay "and struggling with it."

Emmy would also chase, or at least run out at, officers emerging from the Regional Air Defense Command building at close of day. She would lie in wait under the Command building until they came down the front steps. Like a big, somehow sinewy powder puff she would pounce and light right in front of them and then scurry back to her hiding place, having shaken their composure. But The General did not rattle easily. He took a shine to her.

I didn't work in the Command building, but we were quartered right across from it. Through our kitchen window I would see The General poking playfully at Emmy with his swagger stick and hear him calling her "WP," which stands for white phosphorus, a particularly loathsome kind of explosive. She would loll when he came at her, and then she would slap at his stick. Once, she and I were out walking. Emmy was the only cat I ever had who would go on long walks with me, and keep up; but she always acted as though she only happened to be heading in the same direction I was. We passed the garden-plot area. There was The General, digging. I veered toward a grove of trees, but Emmy ran over to him. As I looked on, frozen, she wet his mustard greens. It didn't faze him. Word did get around that he disapproved of her chasing the pheasant, whose appearance in some way pleased him, but months passed and he never took that matter, or any other, up with me.

Then one afternoon I was outside in full uniform hanging diapers. Regulations prohibited doing such a thing without changing into fatigues or civilian clothes, but I was in a hurry because the diapers had to be dry before the hour at which, pursuant to post regulations, you couldn't have any laundry in view.

So I was contending with a flapping damp diaper and a high-tension clothespin when I caught a glimpse out of the corner of my eye of a specialist 6 approaching with a gleam in his.

When a superior fails to notice that you are saluting him, you are supposed to say, "By your leave, sir," and he is supposed to look up and return your salute. I had the clothespin and the diaper in my hands, and my hat was resting unevenly on my head, and I was pivoting slowly so as to keep my back always to the advancing spec 6, when I heard him say, "By your lea—YO!"

Emmy had made her only recorded spring at an enlisted man, and had timed

it perfectly. I said, "Carry on, soldier," with relish, over my shoulder, and made to get on with my work.

Then I saw The General coming up the hill from the other direction. It was the closest I had seen him. He was one of those people who are overweight but stay in pretty good shape by dint of the vigor it takes to carry themselves as if in excellent shape. He appeared to be bursting out of his uniform. Wind caught the diaper and wrapped it around my head.

Well, maybe I should have peeled that diaper off forthrightly, faced up to The General, and cried:

"Sir! I shouldn't be here. I got married too young and I don't believe in the war. I want to be skinny-dipping and taking consciousness-exfoliating mushrooms with someone who looks like Grace Slick."

I just stood there. Obliquity saved me. Just as I did not want to admit to myself that I was in the Army, The General may not have wanted to admit to himself that I was either. Or maybe Emmy struck a pose so beguiling to The General's eye that he was loath to spoil the moment by taking into account a diapered lieutenant. (She may have represented to him a freedom beyond even a general's: she could be soft, she could be fierce, she could simply choose.) Either way, he must have angled his eyes so as to make it credible, even to himself, that I was not in his field of vision.

"Quite some cat!" I heard The General say to the spec 6. "Got a bit of the devil in her."

"Yes, sir!" I heard the spec 6 say.

When I unwrapped my head, they were all three gone.

The next time I saw Emmy, I told her with, I am afraid, some reediness of tone, "Quite some cat is right." She was intent on something under an armored personnel carrier and didn't return my salute.

What if I had buttonholed The General, and a dialectic had been wrought: I accepting that America was not cut out for a state of nature, he that napalming Asian peasants was not going to liberate them. The spec 6 might have joined in and reminded us that at heart this was a nation of shifting and mingling middle, not rapidly diverging upper and lower, classes. Together we might have charted a wholesome course toward the seventies, and the eighties might have had some soul.

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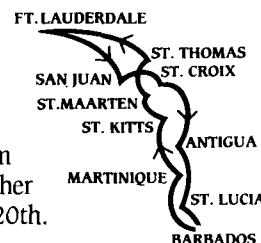
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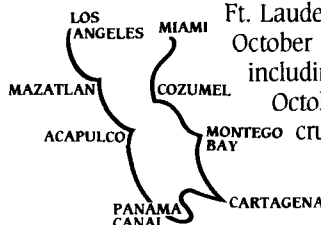
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up to each other, flush? And how well does it turn out when they do? We are all slanty-eyed.

EVEN JOHN WAYNE in *The Sands of Iwo Jima*. On liberty, and planning to get polluted and fight some MPs because he is divorced and his son never writes him, he meets a quite attractive and decent-seeming woman named Mary in a bar. She gets him to lighten up a bit, and takes him to her apartment.

The two of them see something in each other—in the sixties it would have been no cheap encounter. But at her place, from a back room, a cry is heard. It's a baby. Nice-looking kid, well taken care of. Mary is picking up soldiers, inferably talking to them nude, and getting money from them so she can feed the baby—whose father, she tells Wayne when he asks, is "gone." She adds, "There are a lot tougher ways of making a living than going to war."

Oof. Wayne gets that grim-wry look in the corners of his eyes, softens and toughens all at once, tosses all his cash to the baby in the crib, and moves his essentially compassionate gruffness to the doorway, which he fills.

"You're a very good man," Mary tells him.

Looking off, Wayne vouchsafes a quick, grave near-grin. "You can get odds on that in the Marine Corps," he rumbles, and then he moves on toward Iwo Jima.

Women have told me that I am too oblique. "Tell it to John Wayne," I should have replied. All these years, and it has only just lately begun to occur to me: if he is so good, how come he can't keep any loved ones? Here he is, putting distance between himself and the very things—women and children—whose absence is driving him to drink.

What if Mary's cat had done a quick figure-eight around John Wayne's ankles, causing him to stand there in the doorway for a while and then to come back and sit on the couch; and the cat had jumped up next to him and stared at the side of his head intently, the way cats will do, and caused him to reflect.

We may think of cats as oblique, because by our standards there is an odd cast in their eyes. But insofar as a cat is interested at all, a cat is at least as un-hung-up and upfront as the sixties. If a cat spoke, a cat would say things like, "Hey. I don't see the *problem* here."

What if this cat had moved John Wayne to reflect, "Yuh know . . . the

truth of the matter is, gettin' shot by people, and burnin' 'em alive . . . It's a tougher dollar than bringin' 'em home with you for . . . intimacies and . . . considerations. And—dag burn it, it's less *savory*. Now, I'm not sayin' what you do is *right*, but . . ."

And Mary had seen his point, and then . . . I believe *The Sands of Iwo Jima* would have had a healthier formative effect on me if John Wayne had petted the cat, and exchanged looks with it, and done the same with Mary, and she had undressed. I *like* it when women undress in movies—okay, it has been run into the ground, but I'm glad it got started.

And John Wayne had said, "I've got



something else to get off my chest. You know how, a lot of times, I am aware of something that other people aren't, something that can't be told, so that I have to appear less caring than I am? And a lot of times . . . like in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, I let it be believed that Jimmy Stewart shot Liberty Valance, when actually I did, but that's all right; but I *also* let Jimmy have the woman I love, because . . . well, because even though he can't handle a gun, he's better for her than I am."

"Oh, who says?"

"Well, the thing of it is . . . Here's the thing: I can't get over the notion that honchos and women aren't *right* for each other."

"That's not *true*."

"Oh, no? Why do you think I gravitate toward raw recruits? You can *get on* a raw recruit, that's why. The way you can't with a nude woman. You can *bark* at a raw recruit—in such a way that it's tougher'n hell but six months later the raw recruit, well, he realizes it was for his own good. To a raw recruit you can say—excuse me—you can say, 'You better shape your ass up, mister!' That doesn't work with a nude woman."

"Well . . ."

"Yeah, and nude women always want you to say such obvious things! Things that kinda go without saying: 'You have beautiful breasts and I love to touch them!' Well, I'm touching them, aren't I?"

"Mm . . ."

"Nude women think it's easy to talk to a nude woman. It's not! It's so personal! And there's a woman present!"

"Yes, but . . ."

"It's *hard*."

"I know. Shhh. I know."

And after a while Mary had added, "Isn't this better than bashing and being bashed by MPs?"

"Well . . . *yeah*. *Sure* it is."

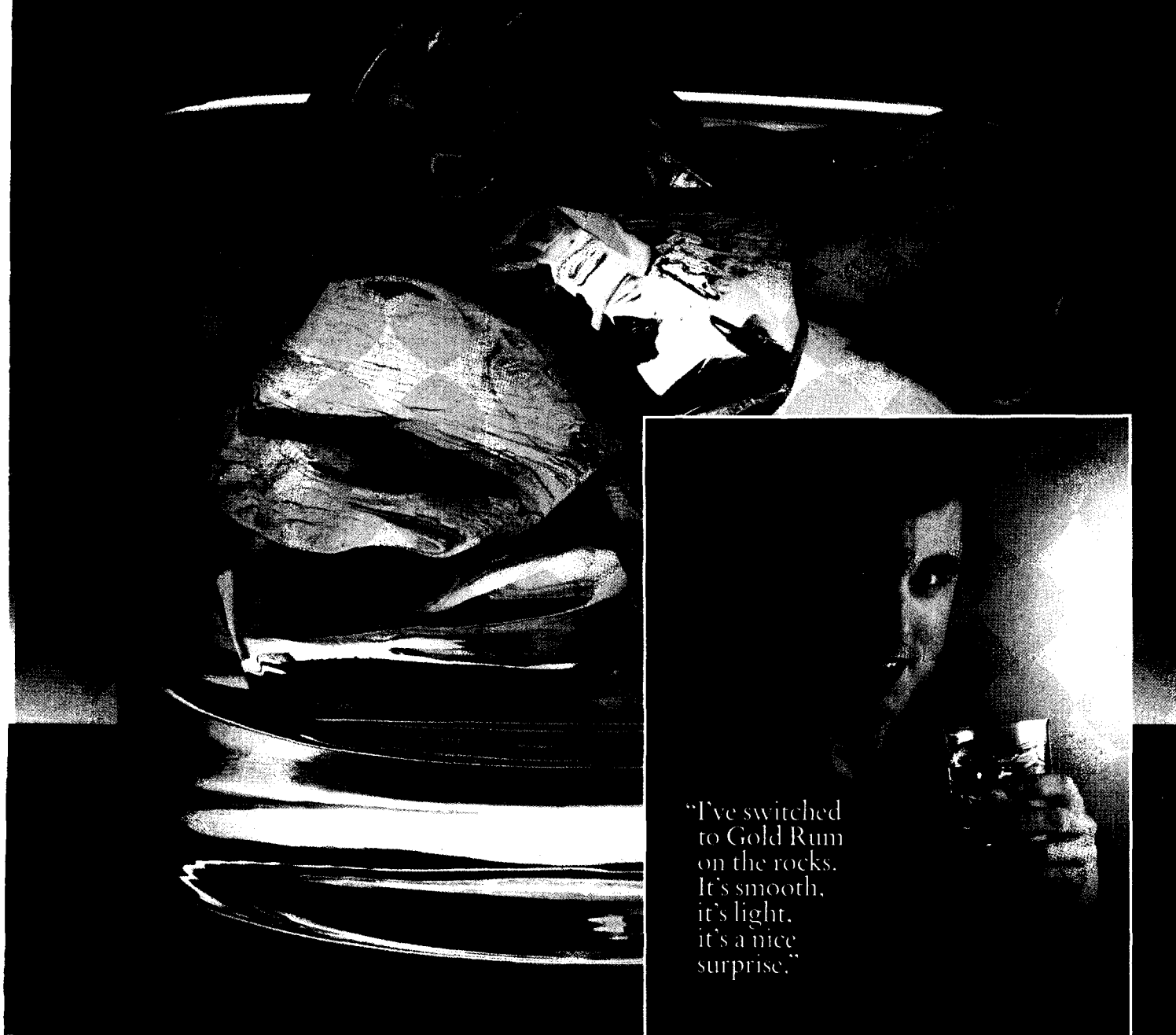
And still later Mary had made the observation that people should not enter upon a family ("or a war," John Wayne had put in) until they have talked nude with enough members of the opposite sex ("or nationality") to dispel some of that virulent *defensiveness* that cats don't have.

I know what would have happened the next morning, though. Because it happened to me in civilian life, with a brand-new leather jacket, not long after I got divorced. John Wayne and Mary would have waked, stretched, smiled a little abashedly at each other, reached for their clothes, and found that Mary's cat had sprayed foully—and that stuff will not come out—on John Wayne's Marine Corps tunic.

Frankly, having been in the situation myself and having given some thought to what he would do in it, I don't think John Wayne could have come up with an expression in the corners of his eyes potent enough to return that salute. I think he would have tried to murder the cat, and Mary would have screamed and the baby would have waked up and screamed and John Wayne would have screamed and the cat would have screamed, lap dissolve to beachhead, projectiles shrieking.

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*Scholars are still laboring to produce a
contemporary English version of God's Holy Word*

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

BY BARRY HOBERMAN

PROTESTANTS, ROMAN CATHOLICS, EASTERN ORTHODOX Christians, and Jews alike affirm that the Bible is Holy Scripture, the inspired Word of God. Yet go to the bookstore in your local shopping mall and you will find the Word of God in half a dozen to a dozen different English translations, and in two or three, or more, editions of each translation. The translations may vary drastically in the style of their English, and some Bibles will contain more biblical books than others. For the uninformed consumer, shopping for the right Bible is a bit like buying a stereo system: the multiplicity of choices is bewildering

and ultimately frustrating. And, like the manufacture of stereo components, Bible publishing is big—surprisingly big—business. According to the Christian Booksellers Association, Bible sales in this country total some \$197 million annually.

Translations of the Bible do more than fortify the faithful and make money. The various translations reflect differing views of the Bible, and invariably a new translation produces controversy within denominational ranks. For example, in the past year and a half the National Council of Churches has issued two volumes of biblical passages in

which the "male bias" of the Scriptures is ostensibly reduced to a minimum. In practically every major Christian denomination in North America vehement, often rancorous debate has ensued over whether to use these volumes in public worship services. While many congregations are unaware of the hubbub over masculine-dominated language in the Bible, others find it a sensitive issue and have split down the middle over it. The discussion, however, has underscored some perennial and fundamental questions: How do religious authorities decide which Bible translation should be used in church or synagogue? What is the role of tradition in informing such a decision? Are some Bible translations suitable for private reading or academic study but inappropriate for use in church or synagogue? And, finally, what distinguishes a good translation of the Bible from a bad or inadequate one?

. . .

The first English translation of the entire Bible was made in the late fourteenth century, by followers of the religious reformer John Wyclif. They did not work from the original languages—the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New. Instead, they used as their source the Latin Vulgate, the standard Bible of Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Not until the sixteenth century were English translations made directly from the Hebrew and Greek. The earliest was William Tyndale's rendering of the New Testament, which was printed in Germany in 1525 and available in England, most scholars believe, early in 1526. Tyndale later issued translations of the Pentateuch (five books of Moses) and the book of Jonah; he also produced, but did not publish in his lifetime, English versions of several other Old Testament books.

Tyndale was a superior scholar of Greek and a fine Hebraist for his time, but he fairly brimmed with controversial theological opinions. Specifically, he shared many of the anti-ecclesiastical sentiments held by his fiery contemporary Martin Luther, who was in the process of turning the Christian world upside down. Tyndale publicized his views in polemical tracts and also through tendentious and even intentionally misleading glosses, or marginal notes, in his translation of the New Testament. These glosses, along with "prologues and prefaces which sounded to heresie, and rayled against the bishopes uncharitably," were among the reasons that Henry VIII, in 1530, condemned Tyndale's New Testament and banned it in England. The pioneer translator, now a marked man, stayed on the Continent and continued working on the Old Testament. But a few years later Henry succeeded in having him arrested, and in 1536 Tyndale was publicly strangled as a heretic and his body burned at the stake near Brussels.

Practically every English translation of the Bible made in the past 450 years owes something to William Tyndale's work. His surviving translations formed the core of Miles Coverdale's Bible (1535), which was the first printed Eng-

lish Bible, and of a series of revisions of Coverdale: Matthew's Bible (1537; "Thomas Matthew" was the pseudonym of John Rogers, Tyndale's associate and literary executor); the Great Bible (1539); the Bishops' Bible (1568); and, in 1611, the King James Version.

The King James Bible, often called the Authorized Version, had its origins in 1604, when James I appointed "certain learned men, to the number of four and fifty," to revise the Bishops' Bible. After seven years they produced a work that was to have an incalculable influence on the development of the English language and that remained for three and a half centuries *the* Bible of English-speaking Protestants.

The King James Version borrowed more from its sixteenth-century precursors than is sometimes acknowledged. Studies reveal that some 60 percent of the wording of its New Testament is identical to that in earlier English Bibles; the most frequently tapped source is Tyndale. This is not to detract from the accomplishment of the King James translators. Again, their commission was to revise the Bishops' Bible, itself a fourth-generation revision of Tyndale. Yet they did much more than sift through the work of their predecessors. The contributions of the committee, in terms of scholarship and literary style, were outstanding, earning for the King James Bible copious praise down the centuries. It is unquestionably a masterpiece.

Since much of the phraseology of the King James Version was taken directly from sixteenth-century Bibles, certain of the usages were already slightly archaic in 1611. By the nineteenth century the problem was acute. Many passages were understandable only because of their familiarity. In other cases readers relied on stock interpretations that had become part of the traditional currency of sermons and Sunday-school instruction. This was hardly what the King James translators had intended; one of the reasons for translating the Bible into the vernacular had been the democratic notion that the Word of God ought to be easily accessible to all.

In 1870 the Church of England authorized a revision of the King James Bible. Separate committees were appointed for the Old and New Testaments. Shortly after work on the project began, the collaboration of a group of American scholars was solicited. The product of this consolidated effort is known as the Revised Version; the New Testament was published in 1881, the Old in 1885. While the work was in progress, some sharp differences of opinion emerged between the British and American committees (which consulted with each other by mail only). One disagreement was over the translation of the Hebrew divine name, the Tetragrammaton. Whereas the British panel wanted to retain the traditional rendering, "the LORD," the Americans wanted to use the name Jehovah instead. To satisfy both parties, the American committee was given permission to put out an edition of the Revised Version that would incorporate its preferred renderings of the disputed words and verses. This edition, the American Standard Version, appeared in 1901.

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IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY scholars continued to make excellent progress toward establishing correct texts of each of the biblical books. The study of ancient cuneiform languages—Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, and others—helped to advance the interpretation of the Old Testament, occasionally providing philologists with the keys to rare words or odd grammatical constructions. The most important development, however, was the publication of several modern and idiomatic English translations of the Bible. A few were very good (notably the translation of the entire Bible made by James Moffatt, of Union Theological Seminary, in New York, and the New Testament of Edgar J. Goodspeed, of the University of Chicago), though each was idiosyncratic, in that it embodied one person's view of the Bible.

A new era in the history of the English Bible was launched in 1928, when the International Council of Religious Education acquired the copyright to the American Standard Version. The council appointed a committee of fifteen American biblical scholars to determine whether a revision of the 1901 Bible was needed and, if so, to assume the task. Over the objections of Harvard's James Hardy Ropes, who wanted to scrap the whole idea and revert to the King James text, and Goodspeed, who argued for a completely new translation in contemporary idiom, the committee voted in favor of a thoroughgoing revision. In 1936, when a long-term contract was negotiated with the publishing company of Thomas Nelson & Sons, work actually began. Advance royalties from Nelson would be used to cover the costs incurred by committee members in attending meetings; since membership was—and still is (a standing committee is responsible for preparing new editions of the Bible)—on a volunteer basis, no salaries, fees, or stipends were provided for in the agreement.

In formally authorizing the revision—which was to be called the Revised Standard Version (RSV)—the council directed the committee to produce a Bible that would “embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and express this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship and preserves those qualities which have given to the King James Version a supreme place in English literature.” The committee hammered out a procedure that it has followed, with only minor changes, to the present day. The members were divided into an Old Testament section and a New Testament section. Each person on the committee was assigned one or more biblical books, for which he was to put together an agenda, or list of proposed changes. Copies of these agendas were then circulated among the other people in the appropriate section. When that section met (on a few weekends during the school year and for ten-day or two-week stretches every summer and sometimes over Christmas break), its members would discuss all suggestions presented in a given agenda—extending to such matters as the spelling of proper names, capitalization, paragraphing, the use of

footnotes, and the placement of punctuation marks (every jot, every tittle!).

After debating a proposed change, the section members would vote on whether to recommend it to the total membership of the RSV committee. A simple majority of those in attendance was required for passage; if a proposal was defeated, or if the vote came out tied, the “basic text,” the American Standard Version, was left unaltered. All changes endorsed in this manner were incorporated into a clean draft of the biblical book under consideration. Copies were once again distributed to section members and this time to the members of an outside advisory board as well. Suggestions made at this stage, too, were reviewed, debated, and voted upon. Finally, all alterations of the American Standard Version text still had to be approved by the full RSV committee. Here a two-thirds vote was needed for adoption, although in practice the committee was not given to overriding the recommendations of its subgroups.

The RSV committee worked on through the war years, and in February of 1946 the Revised Standard Version New Testament was published. On the whole it was received warmly, above all in mainstream-to-liberal Protestant churches and seminaries. Yet, in spite of wide agreement that the RSV was destined to replace the King James, it did not cause a very great stir in 1946. Six years later the Old Testament was finished, and in September of 1952 the complete Bible appeared, accompanied by a smartly orchestrated publicity campaign.

The 1952 edition of the RSV, appearing as it did during the heresy-minded McCarthy era, was attacked by some religious fundamentalists for allegedly compromising, among other things, the divinity of Jesus, the integrity of the Trinity, and the historical reality of the Virgin Birth. Later criticisms were largely the measured observations of scholars, members of the clergy, and educated lay people who had spent time with the translation. Many suggestions that appeared in review articles and published notes, as well as some that were submitted directly, found favor with the committee and eventually led to changes in the RSV text. (A slightly revised edition was issued in 1962 and the second edition of the RSV New Testament—also a light revision—was published in 1971.)

IN THE THIRTY-TWO YEARS SINCE THE COMPLETE RSV Bible appeared, it has become the most popular Bible translation in the United States, and probably in the English-speaking world. Moreover, as the first widely accepted alternative to the King James Version (excepting the Douay Bible, the Bible of English-speaking Roman Catholics for three and a half centuries, a translation not of the original Hebrew and Greek but of the Latin Vulgate), the RSV prepared the way for a succession of excellent English Bibles that appeared in the 1960s and 1970s. These include the New English Bible (the work of British Protestant scholars), the Jerusalem Bible (a Catho-

lic effort heavily dependent on *La Bible de Jérusalem*, a version produced by and for French Catholics), the New American Bible (sponsored by American Catholic authorities but done with the help of Protestant scholars), Today's English Version, popularly known as the Good News Bible (produced by Protestant scholars working under the auspices of the American Bible Society), and the New Jewish Version (done by a committee that included Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jewish scholars, as well as the novelist Chaim Potok). Each is a fresh translation from the original languages; each has considerable scholarly and stylistic merit and makes a distinctive contribution to the heritage of the English Bible.

None of these versions, however, is used as extensively today as the RSV, chiefly because of the RSV's success in updating the King James tradition. The revisers produced a Bible that is far more accurate than the King James Version, and much easier to understand. Yet to a remarkable degree the RSV preserves the feel of the King James—its dignified cadences, its euphony, its undeniable grandeur and power. This is an admirable balancing act, but it was not achieved without certain sacrifices. The original RSV committee held that the language of the King James Bible was too beautiful and majestic, too ingrained in the minds of churchgoers, and too freighted with emotional and spiritual associations to be jettisoned entirely. They did their best to retain piquant turns of phrase and to keep the wording of famous passages reasonably intact. However, they also excised obsolete or particularly archaic words and usages. These occasionally clashing impulses—to keep what was precious but to modernize the text overall—resulted in an odd linguistic compromise. The language of the RSV is modern enough to be lucid, but, unlike the language of some more recent translations, it is not really contemporary. Often the diction has an agreeable quaintness to it, but at times it is just stiff and stodgy. Yet to native speakers of English, whose whole notion of Scripture has been conditioned by the stately rhythms of the King James Version, the RSV sounds the way the Bible is supposed to sound. Producing a Bible that will sound more authentically contemporary and yet will continue to evoke the King James is one of the RSV committee's fundamental goals as

it moves ahead on a comprehensive revision of the RSV text, a project that has been in progress for several years. The committee hopes to publish a new edition of the complete Bible in 1990.

Whereas the 1952 Bible was produced almost exclusively by Protestant males, the new edition is being prepared by a more heterogeneous group. Of the thirty-three people on the present committee, six are Roman Catholic and one is Greek Orthodox; Harry M. Orlinsky, who worked on the 1952 RSV, is still the only Jew. Just four women serve, but given the very low proportion of established

biblical scholars who are women, this number is not surprising.

Under its current chairman, the New Testament scholar Bruce M. Metzger (recently retired from teaching after forty-four years on the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary), the committee is following virtually the same order of procedure as before. One new twist is that the Old Testament section, in order to speed up its work, has split into three subsections, which meet simultaneously, twice a year. Most of the key translation issues are the same ones that occupied the committee

in the thirties, forties, and fifties: what has changed is not so much the questions that need to be asked as the way the committee answers them.

THE QUESTIONS THAT TODAY'S BIBLE TRANSLATOR deals with tend to fall into four categories: canon, textual basis, interpretation, and English style.

The question of canon amounts to this: Whose Bible is being translated? The answer is usually predetermined by the denomination or organization sponsoring the translation. Protestants, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Jews differ on the number of books that constitute Scripture. In a few cases they disagree on the composition of particular books.

The Jewish canon consists of the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Bible, or what Christians call the Old Testament. It is represented in English translation by the Jewish Publication Society's New Jewish Version, whose editor-in-chief was Harry M. Orlinsky.

The Protestant canon—represented by the vast major-



ity of English Bibles available today—comprises the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. However, many Protestant Bibles have in them an additional fifteen works. Known collectively as the Apocrypha, these are usually placed between the Testaments. Though they are of ancient Jewish origin, the Apocrypha never appear in manuscripts or printed editions of the Hebrew Bible, and we have no firm evidence that ancient Jewish communities ever regarded them as “inspired”—that is, as Scripture. They *are* found in manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, and, with one exception (the book known as 2 Esdras), in copies of the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament. In Protestant churches today, and especially among Anglicans, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, the books of the Apocrypha are accorded a kind of “recommended reading” status.

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, includes twelve of these documents—all but 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, and the Prayer of Manasseh—in the canon of Scripture. Yet not until 1546, after centuries of debate and a considerable amount of confusion, were they officially declared to be sacred and canonical. Catholics refer to these twelve books as deuterocanonical (“second-listed”), to indicate that their status was formally determined later than that of the other sixty-six books of the Bible. Catholic Bibles often have the deuterocanonicals interspersed throughout the Old Testament, following the usual arrangement found in medieval manuscripts of the Vulgate.

Eastern Orthodox churches, in general, accept as canonical all the books included in the Roman Catholic canon, together with 1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, the third and fourth books of Maccabees, and Psalm 151 (the Hebrew psalter consists of 150 psalms; an extra psalm occurs in some manuscripts of the Septuagint). Finally, a few of the so-called Oriental Christian churches—the Ethiopian, for example—have incorporated still other ancient Jewish works into *their* canons.

The 1952 edition of the RSV consisted of the Old and New Testaments only. In the month following its publication the Episcopal Church asked the National Council of Churches, the holder of the RSV copyright, to authorize an RSV edition of the Apocrypha. The Council did so, a panel of revisers was appointed, and in 1957 the RSV Apocrypha appeared under separate cover. Some subsequent editions of the RSV contained the books of the Apocrypha, in a section at the end of the New Testament. (The vast majority of RSV Bibles printed since 1957, however, lack the additional books.)

A Catholic edition of the RSV, issued in 1966, contained the deuterocanonicals situated among the books of the Old Testament, in accordance with traditional Catholic practice. After the second edition of the New Testament was published, in 1971, the RSV committee resolved to make available an edition that would be acceptable (as far as the question of canon was concerned) to Protestants and Catholics alike. A compromise was worked out, providing for the publication of a Bible that would contain four sections,

in this order: the Old Testament, the deuterocanonical books of the Catholic Church, the three books of the Apocrypha that do not figure among the deuterocanonicals, and the New Testament. This edition, which appeared in 1973 as the RSV Common Bible, won the approval of Pope Paul VI. Still, it did not meet the needs of English-speaking Eastern Orthodox Christians, and the RSV committee realized this. Even as the Common Bible was being shipped to bookstores, five committee members were busy translating 3 and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151. In 1977 Oxford University Press published the New Oxford Annotated Bible, with the Apocrypha, Expanded Edition, Revised Standard Version, which includes these works. This edition is the closest thing to an ecumenical Bible that we have in the English language, although the presence of the New Testament naturally makes it unacceptable to Jewish authorities and inappropriate for use in synagogues. Nonetheless, while many Jews are uncomfortable with the idea of reading from a Bible that has the New Testament in it, nothing in the RSV Old Testament ought to prevent a Jew from using it for private study. (The same cannot be said of certain other English versions of the Old Testament, most notably that found in the commercially successful Living Bible—an inaccurate and tendentious paraphrase of the Bible that is popular with evangelicals but that has been repudiated by virtually all responsible biblical scholars.)

THE NEXT ISSUE THAT CONFRONTS THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR is that of the textual basis for the translation. We have no original text of any biblical book, and some books may have circulated in more than one version almost from the beginning of their existence as written documents. One theory has it that in the case of a number of Old Testament books three distinct texts emerged between the fifth and first centuries B.C., among the Jews of Palestine, Egypt, and Babylonia, respectively. Later, when ancient Jewish and Christian authorities defined the limits of the biblical canon, they did not fix the precise text of each individual book. To further complicate matters, all the books of the Bible have to some degree suffered the textual corruption that is the inevitable by-product of two to three thousand years of manuscript copying and recopying.

How, then, do Bible translators establish reliable working texts of the books that they are to translate? Even the assumption that a given book had a single prototype, an *Urtext*, is itself questionable and unprovable. What scholars can do is try to reconstruct, from surviving manuscripts, the earliest stage of the text that can be established with confidence. This is an extraordinarily tangled problem, one that requires scholars to sift through a prodigious mass of data. In some instances where the text of a verse is obviously corrupt, half a dozen plausible reconstructions of the verse have been proposed. Such conjectural solutions to textual cruxes are often quite ingenious. The job of a Bible translator is—or should be—to choose the most

probable reconstruction, to discriminate between what is merely ingenious and what is in fact likely.

Establishing a good critical text for the New Testament is a less severe task than establishing a text for the Old. Most of the books of the New Testament were composed in the second half of the first century; a few—Jude and 2 Peter, for example—may stem from the second century. We possess complete manuscripts of the Greek New Testament that date from the fourth century, as well as copies of individual books that may be as early as the second century in origin. Therefore, the oldest surviving copies were made a maximum of three centuries after the books were originally written. Thanks to the existence of these early manuscripts, New Testament scholars, unlike their Old Testament colleagues, have been able to reach something resembling a consensus on the matter of a critical text. That something is a work entitled *The Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies. It contains a critical text of the New Testament, prepared by an international, interdenominational panel of specialists and intended especially for translators.

The text of the Old Testament is in places the stuff of

scholarly nightmares. Whereas the entire New Testament was written within fifty to a hundred years, the books of the Old Testament were composed and edited over a period of about a thousand. The youngest book is Daniel, from the second century B.C. The oldest portions of the Old Testament (if we limit ourselves to the present form of the literature and exclude from consideration the streams of oral tradition that fed it) are probably a group of poems that appear, on the basis of linguistic features and historical allusions contained in them, to date from roughly the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C. They include the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–18, 21), the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:2–31), the Blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49:2–27), the Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33:2–29), the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1–43), Psalm 29, Psalm 68, and a number of other poetic compositions now embedded in longer works. So the Bible was written over a span of some 1,100 to 1,300 (or more) years. (The books of the Apocrypha belong to the period between the Testaments; they, together with a corpus of documents commonly known as the Pseudepigrapha, are often referred to as intertestamental literature.)

RE-INTERMENT: RECOLLECTION OF A GRANDFATHER

What a strange feeling all through the years to carry
It in your head! Once—say almost
A hundred and sixty-odd years ago, and miles
Away—a young woman carried
It in her belly, in secret caressed it,
And smiled. It was
Not lonely there. It did not see
Her smile, but knew itself a part of the world
It lived in. Do you remember
A place like that?

How strange now to feel it—that being, lonely
But not alone, snow locked from the world in my head
As I lie stiff in my sleepless bed!
Is one of the strange noises
Trapped in my skull only
The lonesome fingers scrabbling to get out?
For he knows few others there or what they talk about.
How lonely each night he must feel with newer,
stranger voices.

In dream I try to identify his tone
Caught in the insane colloquy and wrangling
About what was true or not true, done or not done,
But I can't place his voice in the tussling and tangling,
And certainly not when the weeping starts, mad laughter,
Or the *zip* and *whish* which like bat wings in dark air—

All locked in the something dome my shoulders bear.
But sometimes just silence comes, and a dreamy twilight.
I see his lips, soundless, move, old hands stretched to me there.
Then his face fades from my sight.

Yes, sometimes I wake, and I know what will wake me.
It's again the fingernails clawing to get out,
Get out and tell me a thousand things to make me
Aware of what life's obligation is, or what life's all about.
I feel edges sharper each year dig at my skull.
Or is it only a dream? Then in daylight too comes dream
As I stand at the mirror and watch hair grow thin and pate gleam,
I stand there and strain to hear words, but the voice is too low,
And there's nothing to do but feel my heart full
Of recollection of more than seventy years ago.

Some night, not far off, I'll sleep with no recollection—
Not even his old-fashioned lingo, or at dinner the ritual grace,
Or the scratched-in-dust map of Shiloh, and the Bloody Pond,
Or the use of words like *honor* without shame.
And in that last communal trance, when the past
has left no trace,
He'll not again feel the world's contempt or condescending smile,
For there'll be nobody left in that endless after-while
To love him—or know the lineaments of his face.

—Robert Penn Warren

The Hebrew text of the Old Testament now in use is a highly standardized text that was consolidated, fine-tuned, and faithfully transmitted by Jewish scholars and scribes of the Middle Ages, called the Masoretes. Using as their guide the oral and written traditions that had been handed down from the ancient rabbis, the Masoretes worked to preserve and safeguard what they believed to be the definitive text of the Hebrew Bible. The same pious motives led them to suppress all competing textual traditions. In addition to conservation, they were responsible for an exceptionally important innovation. Up to the time of the Masoretes the Hebrew language had been written with consonants only. Hebrew, like Arabic, can be written pretty adequately using only consonants, but on occasion this creates ambiguity. A passive verb may be misconstrued as active, an attached preposition can be mistaken for part of a verbal root, and so on. The Masoretes, to ensure that the sacred words of Scripture would be understood and also pronounced correctly, employed vowel signs in the form of tiny strokes and dots, and added these to the consonantal text. They even added accents and cantillation symbols to guarantee the proper chanting of biblical passages in worship services. The resultant text, known today as the Masoretic text, exhibits only the most minute, semantically inconsequential variations from one manuscript to another.

The oldest extant manuscripts of the Masoretic text, upon which all modern editions of the Hebrew Bible are based, date from the ninth to the eleventh century A.D.—more than a thousand years after the *latest* book of the Old Testament was written. As a rule, ancient and medieval scribes felt obliged to copy the received text as accurately as possible, without making any changes or adjustments. Yet virtually every scribe who ever copied a biblical manuscript perpetuated the errors of others and introduced a few of his own. Imagine this process being repeated for one to two thousand years, and you have some idea of the vicissitudes that the Hebrew biblical text has endured. Compounding the problem was the occasional scribe who made a conscious alteration in the text, either for ideological reasons or because he sincerely thought he was correcting someone else's mistake.

Until 1947 the only direct evidence for the pre-Masoretic Hebrew text of the Old Testament was a lone papyrus leaf dating from about 100 B.C.; this preserves the text of the Ten Commandments. But in 1947 the study of the Old Testament text was suddenly revolutionized by the discovery of the first Dead Sea Scrolls, in a cave at Qumran, near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. Over the next decade another ten caves in the immediate area yielded additional manuscript treasures. Among the finds (which also included an assortment of nonbiblical texts) were a complete Hebrew scroll of the book of Isaiah, a verse-by-verse commentary incorporating most of the Hebrew text of chapters one and two of Habakkuk, and leather and papyrus fragments of the Hebrew text of every other Old Testament book, with the sole exception of Esther.

Although the age of the manuscripts was initially in question, scholars now generally agree that they date from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D.; a few may go back to the third century B.C.

When the high antiquity of the scrolls was realized, some scholars anticipated that the biblical text preserved in them would differ substantially from the medieval Masoretic text, thereby demonstrating that the Old Testament's journey through the hands of generations of Jewish copyists had left its text in a most imperfect state. However, although the scrolls furnish numerous readings at variance with the Masoretic tradition, the Dead Sea and Masoretic texts of the Old Testament are strikingly alike.

The most important ancient version of the Old Testament is the Greek Septuagint, originally produced for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. Parts of it date from as early as the third and second centuries B.C. As a translation, it is uneven in quality. In some cases where the Septuagint and the Masoretic text disagree, the Septuagint passage is clearly a bad translation of an underlying Hebrew text that was identical to the version of the passage found in Masoretic manuscripts. But in other instances the discrepancies are too marked to have been caused by poor translation. Long before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars had guessed that in cases where the ancient translator did not appear to be at fault, the Greek text actually reflected a Hebrew original appreciably different from what survives in the Masoretic text. This theory was dramatically confirmed by the Dead Sea copies of the books of Samuel. The text contained in these ancient Hebrew biblical manuscripts corresponds much more closely to the Septuagint Greek version of Samuel than to the Hebrew text found in Masoretic manuscripts of the Middle Ages. This creates a dilemma for the translator: which text does one translate? The easy response is that one translates the reading that in one's opinion is most nearly identical to the presumed original, the prototype. But on what grounds does one arrive at such an opinion? What if there is no convincing basis for preferring one reading to another? What if the biblical book in question, being a collection of traditions that circulated widely and in a diversity of forms before ever being committed to writing, seems to have crystallized from the very outset in a number of equally "original" written versions? Often the methodology that lies behind textual choices is unclear or inconsistent.

The RSV committee's position with respect to the Old Testament text has changed over the years. Work on the first edition of the Old Testament was well under way when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, and even when the complete RSV Bible was issued, in 1952, scholars were just beginning to comprehend the significance of these ancient manuscripts for the history of the biblical text. The scrolls have furnished definitive proof that the medieval Masoretes faithfully preserved a textual tradition of exceptional antiquity, and the current RSV committee is much less inclined to opt for non-Masoretic readings than the pre-1952 committee was.

THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION BASICALLY IS this: how do translators establish the precise meaning of a word, a verse, or a passage in the Bible? This is not the same thing as determining the best way to say it in English, although the two issues are closely intertwined and sometimes inseparable. A translator must first establish what the original text is saying before he decides how to express that meaning in the "target" language, the language into which he is translating.

The problem of interpretation, like the problem of the textual basis, is much worse for the Old Testament than for the New. New Testament Greek differs somewhat from the Greek of the classical authors but poses relatively few difficulties for modern scholars. Its vocabulary and syntax are for the most part well understood (though any language in the hands of a wordy writer like Paul can tax the ability and patience of skilled translators).

Biblical Hebrew presents more problems. Hundreds of words occur but once in the entire Old Testament. The meanings of many of these are obscure; the Old Testament words for various animals and plants, for example, cannot be defined with exactitude. Prose syntax is usually clear; however, the syntax of ancient Hebrew poetry is extraordinarily problematic. For hundreds of verses—in Psalms, Job, Isaiah, Hosea, and one or two other books—any English rendering is speculative or at best provisional.

Where does a translator turn when the meaning of an Old Testament word or passage is unclear (assuming he believes the text to be sound at that point)? The first place is the ancient versions, to see how they render the unit in question. Often, though, the translators of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targums (Aramaic translations of portions of the Bible), and the other versions appear to have been as baffled by a particular word or passage as their modern counterparts are. Then other methods must be used.

Scholars have been able to figure out the meaning of many a Hebrew word by reviewing the corpus of Old Testament words derived from the same root and then examining how the first word is used in the sentence(s) in which it occurs. Sometimes context alone is a reliable guide to a word's meaning. But scholars can also look for help outside the Old Testament, using what is called the comparative philological method—one of the most controversial strategies in all of biblical studies.

Biblical Hebrew, the form of Hebrew found in the Old Testament, is a member of the Semitic subfamily of languages, which in turn belongs to a larger group that many linguists are now calling the Afroasiatic family. The linguistic relatives of Hebrew include a number of present-day tongues—such as Arabic, modern Aramaic, and a group of languages spoken in Ethiopia—and an even greater number of dead languages, among them Akkadian, spoken in ancient Babylonia and Assyria; Ugaritic, the language of ancient Ugarit, an important Canaanite city-state situated on the Mediterranean coast of north Syria (the site of Ugarit was discovered in 1928); Eblaite, named after the ancient Syrian city-state of Ebla (texts in this language

were first unearthed in 1974); Phoenician, a widely used commercial language of antiquity, originally spoken in what is today Lebanon; Moabite, Ammonite, and Edomite, the ancient tongues of what is now Jordan, each only scantily attested; ancient Aramaic, represented by a host of dialects from all over the Near East; Classical Ethiopic; and Classical Arabic. (For the sake of comparison, English—along with German, Dutch, Flemish, Yiddish, Afrikaans, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Icelandic, among others—belongs to the Germanic subfamily of the Indo-European family. Language families are believed to descend from a single *hypothesized* parent language that was spoken at a time long before the invention of writing, and thus for which no documentary evidence exists.)

A typical word in a Semitic language is derived from a three-consonant root, which itself covers a semantic range, or area of meaning. Most roots occur in more than one Semitic language, and the general meaning of a root is usually the same from one language to the next. So, for example, the common Semitic root *k-t-b* covers the general idea of writing and things related to writing. It yields not only the basic verb "to write" but also, in one language or another, words for book, author, scribe, document, list, library, bookstore, school, desk, office, marriage contract, amulet, foreordained, secretary, and dictaphone. A much broader range of meaning attaches itself to a Hebrew or Arabic or Aramaic root than to an English infinitive.

In the comparative philological approach to Old Testament interpretation a lost meaning of a word in Biblical Hebrew is sought by studying the root's cognates in other Semitic languages. Scholars look for a particular meaning that is well attested in another language to provide them with the true meaning of their obscure Hebrew word.

The language that has done more than any other to illumine rare Old Testament words is Ugaritic. The study of Ugaritic literature began soon after the first texts were found, in 1929; no archaeological discovery, not even that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, has had a more profound impact on our understanding of the Bible. The Ugaritic mythological and ritual texts, written in cuneiform script but in a language closely akin to Biblical Hebrew, have given scholars a direct window onto the Canaanite fertility religion against which much of the Old Testament is an undisguised reaction. The Israelite prophets rail repeatedly against Canaanite Baal-worship, but prior to 1929 their fulminations were our chief source of knowledge about Baal-worship and the mythology behind it. The Ugaritic texts help fill in the Canaanite background of Old Testament religion by supplying us with the literature of the Baal-worshippers themselves.

The linguistic parallels between Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic, as well as the cultural parallels between ancient Israel and ancient Ugarit, are naturally of great interest to Bible translators. One verse for which Ugaritic apparently provides the key that unlocks the true meaning is Psalm 68:6. The RSV, reflecting the traditional interpretation of this verse (much of the important work on Ugaritic has

been published since the completion of the RSV Old Testament), reads: "God gives the desolate a home to dwell in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a parched land." A Ugaritic cognate suggests that the Hebrew word translated "to prosperity" should actually be rendered "with jubilation." Another example is Judges 5:17. The RSV translates the first part of the verse: "Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he abide with the ships?" Now, however, Ugaritic evidence makes it likely that "with the ships" is wrong. The more probable rendering is "and Dan, why did he abide at ease?" The new edition of the RSV may or may not include these specific changes, though it is certain to include a number of alterations of a similar nature, based on the evidence furnished by Ugaritic.

The problem with the comparative philological method is that one can never be sure that the meaning of a root or a word in one language is the same as the meaning of its cognate in a related language. Take the common Hebrew word for bread. Its Arabic cognate means "meat," and in another, little-known Semitic dialect, the equivalent word denotes "fish" or "shark."

The English word *worm* is related by origin to the German *Wurst*, "sausage." Our *knave* goes back to the Old English *cnafa*, which simply meant "youth." The French verb *achever* can sometimes mean "to achieve," but its usual meaning is "to finish, to put the finishing touch to."

In the case of Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic, a given root frequently has the same meaning in both languages—but not always. Hebrew was spoken in ancient Palestine; Ugaritic had its home far to the north, in northwestern Syria. The city-state of Ugarit was at its cultural zenith from roughly 1450 to around 1200 B.C.; Ugaritic literature therefore predates most of Old Testament literature by hundreds of years, and this fact alone ought to make anyone wary of drawing precise analogies between the two.

THE FINAL ISSUE IN THE TRANSLATION PROCESS—and one that goes hand in hand with determining the meaning of the original text—is putting the text into appropriate English. Bible translations can and do differ markedly in the way they handle questions of canon,

textual basis, and interpretation, but style is the main criterion by which most readers distinguish one version of the Bible from another.

Although the question of archaic language has already been touched on, a few more things need to be said, if only because this issue obstinately refuses to die. Some still feel that the English Bible should be couched in old-fashioned, King Jamesian language. Many worshipers who grew up with the King James Version feel strongly that its antiquated vocabulary and syntax are invested with a special dignity, an indescribable aura of holiness. The archaic

language helps to inspire in them a sense of religious awe. Some who are willing to concede that the scholarship of the King James Bible is outdated and that certain obsolete words and phrases do need to be replaced still argue that any revision of the King James ought to preserve the generally archaic tone of the language. Others simply claim that the Bible, being an ancient book, is supposed to sound "old."

The idea that archaic biblical language has an awe-inspiring quality cannot be dismissed easily. For 374 years the King James Version has

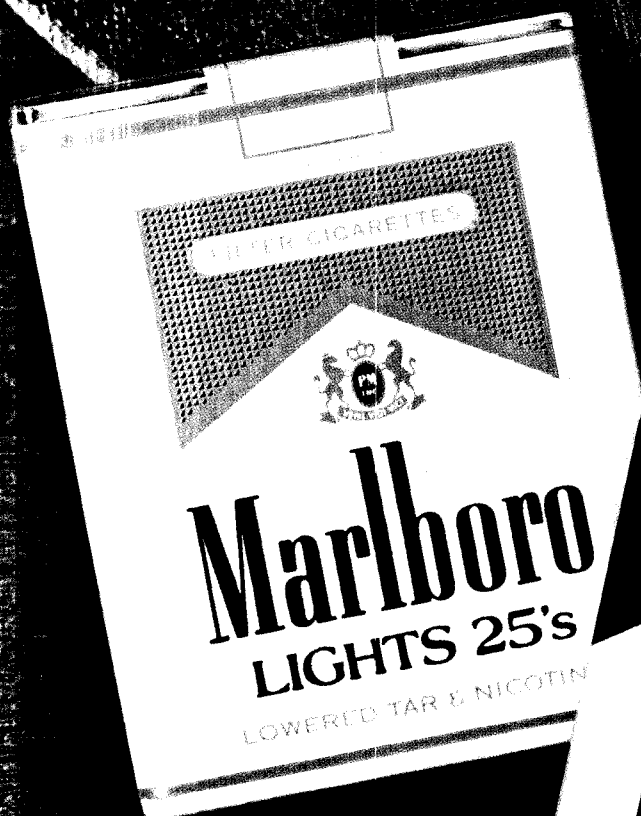
had a powerful hand in molding our attitudes toward Scripture, religious language, and language in general. Only in the past few decades has the deeply rooted notion that the King James Version *is* the Bible begun to slip out of the minds of native speakers of English. This process will surely accelerate as the King James continues to lose ground to contemporary English versions of the Bible.

The preference for a Bible that sounds antique is easily explained, but archaism is not a defensible option for translators. Too often archaic language is an obstacle to understanding. It interferes with the reception of the Bible's message; at times it renders that message unintelligible. The idea that putting the Bible into clear, contemporary language somehow diminishes the magnificence of the Word has an ironic aspect: the majority of the Bible was written in language that sounded clear and contemporary to people living in the era in which it was written.

Exceptions can be found, but these only prove the rule. "The whole point of the New Testament language is that it's written for the most part in the Koine language of the people and *not* in an archaizing dialect," observes George



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MacRae, of Harvard Divinity School, a member of the RSV committee since 1972. "There are a number of examples where you can bring that out very clearly. A really clever translation of Luke, for example, should translate the first two chapters—the infancy story—in somewhat archaic language, because they're written in imitation of the Septuagint. The Greek would have sounded archaic—what we would call 'biblical'—to people in the first century A.D."

The RSV deserves some of the criticism it has received for its ambivalent attitude toward the use of archaic language. In some places the RSV sounds pleasantly quaint; in other places it sounds antiquated and musty. Almost never does it sound genuinely contemporary—and this was true even in 1946, when the RSV New Testament first appeared.

Two things should be said in the RSV's defense, however. In the 1930s and 1940s, when most of the work on the first edition was completed, the study of linguistics was still in its infancy, and translation theory lacked the sophistication and methodological rigor it has since acquired. Also, the forthcoming edition of the RSV will contain far less archaic language than previous editions contained. For example, the archaic second-person pronouns (*thou, thee, thy, thine*) and their corresponding verb forms (*art, wilt, didst, dost, enrichest*, and so forth) will be dropped altogether. The original committee did away with these pronouns everywhere but in the language of prayer; thus, they were retained in the Psalms and all other prayers addressed to God. Eliminating them actually brings the English into closer conformity with Hebrew and Greek usage, for in the biblical languages the same second-person pronouns are used to address both human beings and God. Committee members promise that the vocabulary overall will have a more contemporary flavor.

A related matter is what might be called the level of language in a translation. How formal and literary should the language be, as opposed to informal and colloquial? One answer is that ideally the English should mirror the level of the original Hebrew or Greek—which clearly varies from book to book and sometimes from passage to passage. A few translations have made efforts in this direction. However, Biblical Hebrew and New Testament Greek are long-dead languages, and we will never have the kind of sensitivity to their nuances that would permit translators to pin down the level of formality of every verse in the Bible. Furthermore, even where the stylistic level of the original text is relatively obvious, to replicate it faithfully in English is no mean task.

A more practical answer is that the level of language should depend on the intended audience. The existing RSV tends to use fairly formal diction, as one might expect from a translation that was conceived with an eye toward its use in the churches. To the extent that the King James phraseology is retained, a formal tone is inevitable. The RSV hasn't the stylistic elegance of the New English Bible, a British effort that is probably the most graceful and

polished of the modern renderings, but the RSV certainly aspires to be literary rather than colloquial.

In contrast, the American Bible Society, the sponsor of Today's English Version (the Good News Bible), wanted to produce a translation that could be easily understood by all speakers of English, including those who speak it as a second or third language. The translators employed language that is common to both contemporary standard written English and natural, everyday, informal (but not slangy) speech. They avoided not only archaic and arcane terminology but also words that a person of average education might be unfamiliar with, and they put clarity and simplicity ahead of elegance and euphony.

All of the above-mentioned choices between opposites—archaic and contemporary, formal and informal, literary and colloquial—are aspects of the issue of "how to say it in English." A more fundamental choice is between literal and idiomatic, although professional translators sometimes formulate it differently. "In the trade of Bible translating, we speak of a dynamic equivalence translation as opposed to a formal equivalence translation," says Roger Bullard of Atlantic Christian College, a member of the Old Testament and Apocrypha panels for Today's English Version. "By a formal equivalence translation we mean what most people would simply call a literal translation, in which the sentence structure of the original language is reflected in English. The RSV is pretty much a formal equivalence translation. It is not very venturesome in altering sentence structures. It is venturesome—or was, for the 1950s—in breaking away from the traditional King James vocabulary and verb forms. But when it comes to monkeying with the structure of the original, it's quite conservative."

"Today's English Version and the New English Bible could be called dynamic equivalence translations, where the intent is not to translate word by word or phrase by phrase but to translate the meanings of the sentences. They feel perfectly free to change actives into passives, to take long subordinate clauses and make independent clauses out of them—or often in the Old Testament the other way around—or to take a short, staccato pattern of sentences and make something a little longer and more fluid out of it."

How does a dynamic equivalence translation differ from a paraphrase? The answer hinges on how one understands the term *paraphrase*. The Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary (1963) defines it as "a restatement of the meaning of a passage, work, etc., as for clarity." On the basis of this definition one can say that every translation is to some degree a paraphrase—an assertion that no responsible translator would argue with. At the same time, when translators say that someone else's translation is a paraphrase, they often mean it pejoratively. A paraphrase in this sense renders the original text in so loose a fashion that it is not worthy of being called a translation. One frequently hears Today's English Version referred to as a paraphrase, yet many experts maintain that it is no less deserv-

ing of being called a translation than the RSV is. What is the source of the disagreement?

We can eliminate some confusion by setting aside the loaded word *paraphrase* for the moment. The real issue seems to be how we determine what merits the title of *translation* and what doesn't. And the best response is that a translation is a competent and conscientious attempt to convey fully the meaning of the original text. That is, when a translator takes a text in one language and converts it into another language, he must try to capture every bit of meaning that he believes the text had for the readers and hearers for whom it was intended. No element of meaning that inheres in the original should be left out; no additional meaning should be included. To be sure, a good deal of subjectivity is involved in establishing the meaning of a text. The point is that this definition of *translation* centers on the concept of meaning; no importance has been attached to reproducing the original text's sentence structure, word order, grammatical features, and so on.

If one accepts this definition of *translation*, then Today's English Version and the New English Bible (also sometimes dismissed as a paraphrase) should properly be called translations. Formal equivalence translation, which tends toward the literal, and dynamic equivalence translation, which strives to be more idiomatic, are both acceptable methods of rendering a text.

Any serious student of the Bible will want to own the RSV and at least one Bible that represents a dynamic, or idiomatic, approach to translation. An excellent way to enhance one's understanding of a difficult passage in Scripture is to place a number of English versions side by side and compare their renderings. Here is how the RSV and Today's English Version handle two representative, fairly straightforward passages:

Esau Sells His Birthright to Jacob
(Genesis 25:29-34)

RSV

Once when Jacob was boiling pottage, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red pottage, for I am famished!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Today's English Version

One day while Jacob was cooking some bean soup, Esau came in from hunting. He was hungry and said to Jacob, "I'm starving; give me some of that red stuff." (That is why he was named Edom.)

Jacob answered, "I will give it to you if you give me your rights as the first-born son."

Esau said, "All right! I am about to die; what good will my rights do me?"

Jacob answered, "First make a vow that you will give me your rights."

Esau made the vow and gave his rights to Jacob. Then Jacob gave him some bread and some of the soup. He ate and drank and then got up and left. That was all Esau cared about his rights as the first-born son.

Jesus Walks on the Water—Mark's Account
(Mark 6:47-52)

RSV

And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Today's English Version

When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, while Jesus was alone on land. He saw that his disciples were straining at the oars, because they were rowing against the wind; so sometime between three and six o'clock in the morning, he came to them, walking on the water. He was going to pass them by, but they saw him walking on the water. "It's a ghost!" they thought, and screamed. They were all terrified when they saw him.

Jesus spoke to them at once, "Courage!" he said. "It is I. Don't be afraid!" Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind died down. The disciples were completely amazed, because they had not understood the real meaning of the feeding of the five thousand; their minds could not grasp it.

ONE POPULAR ENGLISH BIBLE REALLY DOES NOT DESERVE to be called a translation. Though the Living Bible is billed by its publishers as a paraphrase, implying that it is something less than a full-fledged translation, many evangelical and fundamentalist Christians—normally proponents of biblical literalism—have made this curious text their Bible of choice, holding it to be a valid alternative to the other versions of the Scriptures. However, in numerous places the Living Bible actually distorts the biblical message.

The Living Bible appeared in seven installments between 1962 and 1970, before these were combined under one cover. (A new edition recently came out under the title *The Book*.) It was produced by one man, Kenneth Taylor, who makes no claim to have translated from the original languages. Instead, using as his sources English translations that were available at the time, Taylor simply recast the biblical text in modern language. But he did not consistently strive for that equivalency of meaning which is the hallmark of a genuine translation. On the contrary, he regularly expanded upon and otherwise subtly altered the biblical message. Taken individually, the examples can seem inconsequential, but in their totality they impart to the Living Bible a fundamentalist theological bias. A peculiar kind of arrogance underlies Taylor's method—few devout Christians or Jews would be so presumptuous as to make changes in a text that they consider to be divinely inspired.

Here are a few examples (collected by Eldon Jay Epp in his article "Jews and Judaism in *The Living New Testament*," which appeared in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies*, edited

by Gary A. Tuttle): In 1 John 3:9, where the RSV has "he is born of God," the Living Bible renders "he has been *born again*" (Living Bible's italics). For the RSV's "justification" in Romans 5:16, the Living Bible's term is "glorious life." In Galatians 1:6 and 1:11 "gospel" in the RSV becomes, simplistically, "way to heaven" in the Living Bible. And Galatians 5:5, which the RSV translates as "For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness," appears in the Living Bible as "But we by the help of the Holy Spirit are counting on Christ's death to clear away our sins and make us right with God."

Another weakness of the Living Bible is its seemingly casual denigration of Judaism. Epp, who has catalogued numerous instances of this phenomenon, has written that "the [Living New Testament] appears almost to take pleasure in castigating and chastening the Jews and Judaism—to punish them by tongue-lashing and to reprimand them for failing to accept 'their Messiah'—while all along wishing also, it would seem, to preach the gospel to any Jewish readers."

Where Jesus speaks in the RSV of "this evil generation" and "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matthew 12:45; 16:4), the Living Bible has "this evil nation" and "this evil, unbelieving nation." The RSV translates Luke 17:25 as "But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation"; the Living Bible reads, "But first I must suffer terribly and be rejected by this whole nation." In John 1:17 the RSV says simply, "the law was given through Moses," but the Living Bible expands this to "Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice."

For the RSV's "we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe" (Galatians 4:3), the Living Bible has "We were slaves to Jewish laws and rituals." In Galatians 4:9 what the RSV translates as "weak and beggarly elemental spirits" the Living Bible renders as "another poor, weak, useless religion of trying to get to heaven by obeying God's laws." And in Galatians 5:1, where the RSV has "stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery," the Living Bible reads, "Now make sure that you stay free and don't get all tied up again in the chains of slavery to Jewish laws and ceremonies."

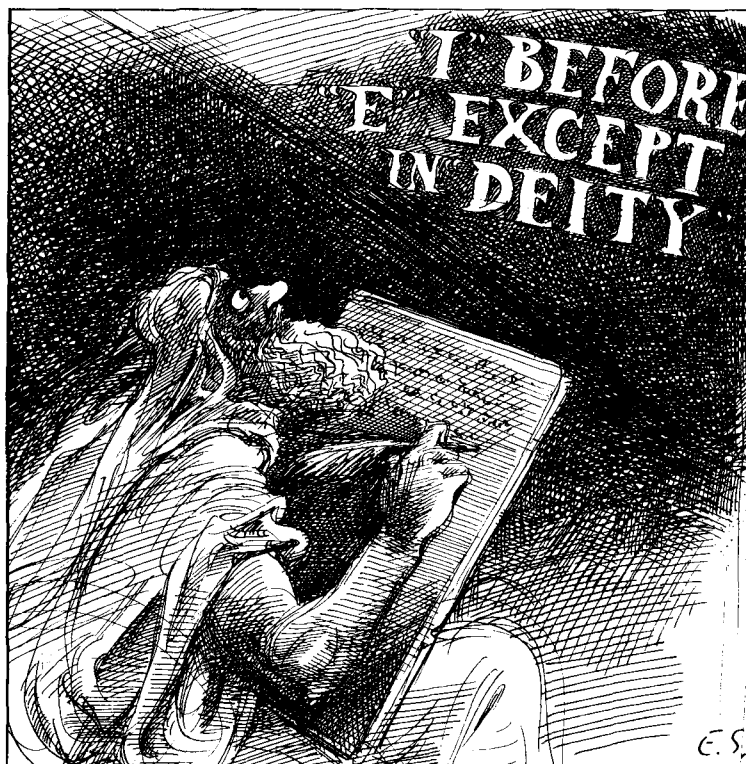
ONE FINAL ISSUE OF BIBLE TRANSLATION IS OF QUITE recent origin. Over the past ten to fifteen years speakers of English have become increasingly sensitive to what is variously referred to as "male-oriented," "masculine-dominated," "patriarchal," or "sexist" language. Many Americans are now uncomfortable with the generic use of such words as *man*, *men*, *mankind*, and *brother(s)*, as well as the use of *he* and *him* to refer to an indefinite person who could be of either sex. They are making an effort to replace such terms with what has been labeled "inclusive" language—language that is inclusive of both

sexes and free of male bias. Whether the English language will change in this direction is no longer in question. Tremendous change has already occurred, and we are sure to experience more. The questions now are how extensive the changes will be—for instance, whether the majority of Americans will come to use *humankind* as a substitute for *mankind*—and how soon certain changes will gain a secure foothold among various segments of the population.

Not one of the major English Bibles—not even the New International Version, which

was published in 1978—fully reflects the dramatic changes in English usage that have taken place already with respect to male-oriented terminology. This is scarcely surprising, because the changes did not really begin to make themselves felt until about 1970, and work on the most recent major versions, Today's English Version and the New International Version, started in the sixties. The translators were aware that change was occurring. "When we began our project, in 1967, the feminist issue of inclusive language had hardly been raised," Roger Bullard says, commenting on his involvement with the Old Testament panel for Today's English Version, "but it began to be felt as we were doing our work, and we felt the linguistic ground shifting beneath our feet. It seemed that we were translating at a very unfortunate time, because before our work was over [the Old Testament was published in 1976], it seemed evident that the English language was destined to change in some unforeseen ways and our translation would then appear dated."

When the RSV committee was at work on the first editions of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the



Apocrypha, the issue of inclusive language was nonexistent. Now, however, committee members are excising all unwarranted male-oriented language as they overhaul the text for the forthcoming revised edition. *Unwarranted* is a crucial word. "The basic principle that the RSV committee uses is that we will remove all masculine-dominated language that has been introduced by the translators," says George MacRae, who serves on the New Testament panel. Thus, no attempt will be made to disguise the fact that every book of the Bible is the product of a thoroughly male-dominated society. To pretend that the ancient Near Eastern world of the Bible was not radically different from our own world would be to deprive Scripture of its historical context. "I think it's part of God's revelation in history that we take history, and we take the time-boundedness of a biblical writer, seriously," says William Holladay, an Old Testament panel member who teaches at Andover Newton Theological School, in Massachusetts. "Then, it's the teaching task of the church or the synagogue, it seems to me, to say, 'Well, all right, Jeremiah said it this way. What God intends through those words may be something a little bit different, so let's talk about that for a while.'"

Where inclusive language can legitimately be substituted for male-oriented language, rephrasing the verse or passage in question is usually a simple task. The RSV committee has made public some examples of changes that it has already approved or is likely to approve for the revised edition. In John 2:10 "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine" does not in fact refer exclusively to males. The committee has proposed to change it to "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk." Similarly, in Romans 2:16, for "God judges the secrets of men," it has proposed "God judges the secrets of human beings." In Paul's letters, when he uses the word "brethren," he is surely addressing both male and female members of the church. The committee is weighing such alternatives as "brothers and sisters"—which some committee members feel has too much of a revival-tent ring to it—and "friends."

In trying to expunge male-oriented phraseology, the committee has improved some renderings in unexpected ways. George MacRae says, "There's a famous passage in 1 Corinthians 13 that talks about love being the higher way, and it begins, 'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.' The term *men* there, though it is the Greek generic word for 'men,' is completely unnecessary, and it obscures the contrast. If we translate it 'If I speak in the tongues of human beings and of angels, but have not love,' then the contrast is brought out much more sharply, because the contrast is between angels and human beings. We find lots of instances like that, where a change that we've become sensitive to because of the women's issue of inclusive language enables us to improve the translation." Often, however, the committee refrains from making a change that would result in what it considers contrived or

awkward English. Currently 1 Corinthians 11:28 reads, "Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." This will be changed to "Let a person examine himself. . . ." English lacks a common-gender singular pronoun in the third person, and the committee feels that "himself or herself" would interrupt the smooth flow of the verse.

A different committee is behind *An Inclusive Language Lectionary*, which, like the RSV, is being prepared under the auspices of the National Council of Churches. The first volume of the lectionary, representing the first year in a three-year cycle of readings from Scripture, appeared in October of 1983. The second volume was published last October, and the third is due this year. A lectionary, as the introduction to the first volume explains, is "a fixed selection of readings, taken from both the Old and the New Testament, to be read and heard in the churches' services of worship." The *Inclusive Language Lectionary* project was created in 1980 on the recommendation of the National Council of Churches Task Force on Biblical Translation. A committee of twelve was appointed "to create for use in services of worship inclusive language lectionary readings based on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, with the text revised only in those places where male-biased or otherwise inappropriately exclusive language could be modified to reflect an inclusiveness of all persons." The lectionary committee, separate from the RSV committee, was free to develop its own approach to the question of inclusive language.

Two controversial principles distinguish the lectionary committee's method from that of the RSV committee. Whereas the goal of the RSV people is to "remove all masculine-dominated language that has been introduced by the translators," the lectionary panel is attempting to revise the RSV text "in those places where male-biased or otherwise inappropriately exclusive language could be modified." The lectionary committee's efforts to eliminate male-oriented language that is intrinsic and integral to the original Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible go far beyond what the RSV committee feels is necessary and appropriate. The second fundamental point of difference is that the lectionary committee has not hesitated to make editorial additions to the biblical text in order to counterbalance what it interprets as "male bias" in certain passages.

Here are some specific examples of how the inclusive-language lectionary recasts the RSV. Justifying its choices with references (in the appendix of the first volume, *Readings for Year A*) to "God's bisexuality" and to God as "the motherly father of the child who comes forth," the lectionary committee has elected to change "God the Father" to "God the Father [*and Mother*]" or, at times, "God the [*Mother and*] Father." The Hebrew divine name, rendered "the LORD" in the RSV, becomes "GOD" or "the SOVEREIGN ONE" in the lectionary. In the New Testament, "Lord" is normally replaced by "Sovereign." "Son" and "Son of God," used in the New Testament to denote Je-

sus, become "Child" and "Child of God." "The Son of man," another New Testament designation for Jesus and a term that has a long and complex history in the Old Testament and in intertestamental Jewish literature, is rendered "the Human One." In many passages where the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned, the lectionary adds in brackets the names of the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. In Matthew 3:9 Abraham's concubine, Hagar, is thrown in for good measure.

The lectionary committee goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid using masculine pronouns. *He, him, his, and himself* are never used to refer to God, to the pre-existent Christ, or to the risen Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16) becomes "For God so loved the world that God gave God's only Child." John 1:10-11 in the RSV reads, "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not." The lectionary has "The Word was in the world, and the world was made through the Word, yet the world did not know the Word. The Word came to the Word's own, but those to whom the Word came did not receive the Word." "Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Philippians 3:20-21) is rendered "Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like Christ's glorious body, by the power which enables Christ even to subject all things to Christ's self." Instead of "Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:13-14), the lectionary gives us "Jesus Christ, who gave self for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Christ's self a chosen people who are zealous for good deeds."

What is wrong with all of this? Well, a number of things. We can begin with "God the Father [*and Mother*]." Certainly, the biblical expression "God the Father" is an example of metaphorical language. Furthermore, a surprising number of biblical passages—especially in the Old Testament—use female metaphors for God. Many of these are examined by Phyllis Trible in her groundbreaking study *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Fortress, 1978), a thoughtful book that obviously left a strong impression on the lectionary committee. Yet, as Trible acknowledges, the Bible "overwhelmingly favors male metaphors for deity." Elizabeth Achtemeier, of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, points out that "God is never addressed as 'Mother,' never invoked as 'Mother,' in the Bible." Bruce Metzger, the RSV chairman, says, "There's a mystery as to what God is like internally, in the Godhead, and I think it's right to say that God transcends gender differences. But the way in which we believe God revealed himself, the way in which the writers of the Old and New Testaments perceive him, is as a father, as a king. We need to teach people God is not an old man sitting on a throne. But

this is the work of Christian educators, not of Bible translators."

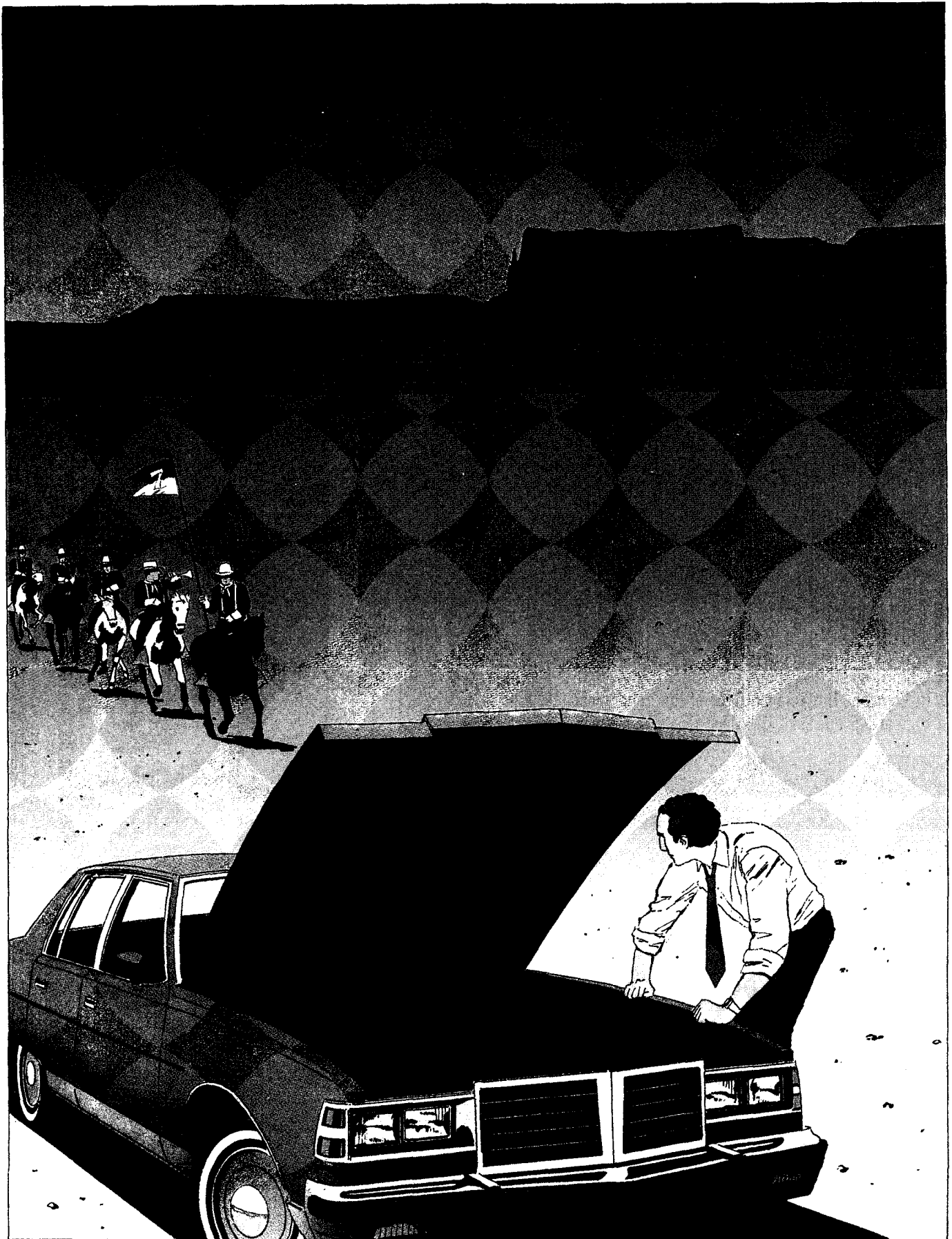
Although translation is more an art than a science, a responsible translator still aims to convey the meaning of the original text as precisely as possible—that is, as precisely as the target language will allow. In this the lectionary committee fails miserably. "A young woman shall conceive and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14) becomes "a young woman shall conceive and bear a child." In the parable of the three servants (Matthew 24:14-30) "a man going on a journey" becomes "someone going on a journey." His servants address him as "Master" in the RSV, but in the lectionary the title is "Sovereign." John 9 is the story of a man born blind, but in the lectionary he (it?) becomes "a person blind from birth," "the blind person," "the one born blind," "the blind one," "the one who had been blind," and "someone born blind." The RSV's "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11) is clear. The lectionary's "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Jesus go into heaven" is unidiomatic and confusing; one wonders if two different Jesuses are being spoken of. Matthew 14:21 in the lectionary reads, "And those who ate were about five thousand men and women and children"—implying a total of five thousand people. Yet that is not how the RSV and other English Bibles understand the verse. The RSV has, "And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children." Today's English Version translates, "The number of men who ate was about five thousand, not counting the women and children." And the New English Bible renders the verse "Some five thousand men shared in this meal, to say nothing of women and children." Must a concern for inclusive language usurp the concern for accuracy, not to mention grammar and syntax?

Virtually everything having to do with the Bible is more complicated, more ambiguous and open to debate, than most Christians and Jews—even educated church and synagogue members—are aware of. To put it another way, too many people give too many easy answers to questions about the Bible. This is true not only with respect to the present subject, Bible translation, but also with respect to the history of biblical times and the theology of the Scriptures. The truth of Christianity or Judaism does not hinge on the answers to questions of these kinds about the Bible, but frequently intellectual honesty *is* at stake.

For Bible translators, whose work may reach an audience in the tens of millions, intellectual honesty is not simply an academic matter but a matter of responsibility. This is where the Living Bible and *An Inclusive Language Lectionary* fall short. Regardless of the specific audience—fundamentalist, feminist, or otherwise—for whom a translation is intended, if the translators are not doing all they can to convey the meaning of the original text accurately, they are not going to produce a responsible translation of the Bible. □

RESCUE

BY GUY BILLOUT



9 mg. "tar", 0.7 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report FEB. '84.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

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A Short Story



ECLIPSE!

BY RAND RICHARDS COOPER



OF ALL MY AFRICAN HOSTS, AGONGO KNEW BEST HOW to get me going. Laughing and crying at the same time—or snorting, which is what these two combine into—I would be at his mercy. Because he was my cabin mate, he knew me well enough to take liberties. His favorite tactic went something like this:

“Bwana Jeff. You are a representative of your country?”

“Sure.”

“So you can tell me some few things about that great place?”

“Anything. Go ahead.”

And then, smiling deviously, he’d ask me about the electoral college, or Daniel Shays’s rebellion, or the greatest jazz trombonists.

What kind of representative was I, anyway? What kind of American?

He playfully exploited my weaknesses. One day I refused to wade through a small, nasty, viscous stream behind school to retrieve a soccer ball—I feared bilharzia and crocodiles, as the book said I should. Fatal mistake. Next day I woke to find taped to our door an old colonial photograph of an African porter carrying a full-grown, fiftyish man in white ducks across what looked like a large puddle. “A Colonial Subject,” the blurred caption said, “carries Sir Evelyn Baring, Governor, in his arms like a great baby.”

“Morning, Sir Evelyn.” Agongo rocked back on his

heels, tugging at a wool cap he often wore, no matter how torrid the weather. With his gappy teeth, wide nose, and flaring moustaches, he looked like a dragon. “Morning, Great Baby,” he said.

“Morning, Magic Dragon.”

And so it was with us at the time of the eclipse. Now, in a village where leopards and witches move at night in the maize fields and people think God lives in splendor on the mountaintop, a total solar eclipse inspires something close to panic. Call it fervor. Anticipating this, we teachers, Africans and whites alike, hoped to turn the energy toward an educational experience. Agongo, who taught geography, and Kamau, the games master, were charged with talking the event up in town among the elders, shopkeepers, and chiefs. I was to come up with film, rolls and rolls of exposed and developed film, so that people could look at the eclipse without harming their eyes. And Lesu, the history teacher—Lesu the diminutive, the philosophizing, the antagonist—was in charge of the feast. But Lesu was skeptical. “Excuse me,” he kept saying, “but are you telling me the day will be like night completely?”

“It will,” we all said.

“Completely?”

“Completely. That is what we are telling you.”

“Excuse me please, but it will not.” Lesu had a habit of gesturing with a hand whose fingers curled around an invisible glass and wiggled at you, as if he were toasting your health. He was a little bald man with a froggy face, who drank, the people said, like a very big man.

Agongo, armed with colored chalk, had taken to drawing planets on blackboards all over school: Sun, Moon, and

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Earth in sloppy alignment. "It is geometry, Bwana Lesu," he said. "Geometry and astronomy."

"Look here." Lesu toasted us all, scratching with his other hand his shining head. "I know what I know."

"You are saying, then, that you won't get the goat for us?"

"No, no, no, bwana, not at all." Lesu went to the door. Always he left our pedagogical summits early, usually to dawdle his way down the road toward the *chai* shops at the edge of town—those forlorn, tin-roofed shacks where tea and pancakes were served in the front rooms, palm wine and the dreaded maize liquor, *chang'aa*, in the back. The first parts of Lesu to enter any room, and the last to leave, were always his smiling face, and his hand, groping the doorframe as if it were a floozy on the dance floor. "I will find a goat, be sure," he said, groping away. "You know, I am not the man to refuse a meal." He left.

Actually, we had good reason to be upset with Lesu at the time of the eclipse. He had gotten himself involved in some pretty shady dealings with a few of the girl students and with Wamboi, the school's bookkeeper. Wamboi was a pretty, unmarried Kikuyu girl of nineteen whose main job was to collect school fees from the parents of our students. On a bicycle she rode the dirt paths from compound to compound, chasing delinquent fees. She sent up plumes of red dust as she went, her filthy accounts book joggling in a bashed-up wire-mesh basket strapped to the handlebars. More often than not, families greeted her with food rather than money, and soon Wamboi, never much of a loan shark but a great dinner guest, began to grow plump. Plumper and plumper she grew, even as the school's accounts waned. Why she didn't marry during this time I didn't know. It was unusual for a country girl her age to be unmarried, and she must have had plenty of offers. Most likely it had something to do with her education. With O-Levels behind her, she was more educated than the vast majority of men in the area, and this made things awkward.

Early one Sunday morning I saw Wamboi walk out of Lesu's house with an armful of clothing. Her resignation, her diligence in washing his stuff, meant one of three things: she was related to him, she was working for him, or she was sleeping with him. And I knew it wasn't either of the first two. There she stood, impossibly straight-legged, bent double at the waist over the foamy tub of clothes. I stood there hearing the distant babble of people speaking in tongues at the Pentecostal service, a good half mile away: Swedish missionaries calling the devil out of African peasants, in fluent Swahili. Wamboi scrubbed and scrubbed. A few things began to make sense.

But Lesu? Why Lesu?

Then one afternoon the headmaster called me in. He wanted my advice. Money was missing, he said, hundreds of shillings. The accounts were unbalanced. Did I know anything? And had I noticed Wamboi at Lesu's? And had I noticed she was pregnant? And did such things happen at schools in my country?

THE STORY HAD SEVERAL SAD CHAPTERS BEFORE ITS enigmatically happy ending. Wamboi was sacked, Lesu haughtily denying both larceny and paternity. After the sacking Lesu no longer seemed to want her around his house. One night I woke to hear them arguing. Back and forth it went, Lesu's voice bellicose, the girl's muted. Nudging the curtain back, I peered out through the window to see Lesu, his head dully illuminated by a single overhead bulb, waving the girl off into the darkness beyond his front porch—flicking his wrist backhandedly, as if at a pesky moth or an incompetent bellhop.

For some weeks Wamboi worked as a washerwoman for Agongo and me. But the school compound depressed her. She would stand at the window staring out at Lesu's house, behind which the great mountain reared its snowy, ancient head. The nearness of snow imbued this equatorial village, perched on land rising from valley to mountain, with a brimming religious spirit I still find elusive. It was a reminder that our consciousness is indeed limited, not definitive. It was a vision, possibly a mirage, of grace, of power. And—and then Lesu would step out of his house, a stumpy, balding African outlined against this alpine majesty, pulling up his pants so that the belt rested high on the north slope of his potbelly. It was ludicrous. He looked like an ostrich. Agongo and I howled. "Why are you laughing?" Wamboi would say, hurt. Seeing this, Agongo would try to keep things light. Once, stropping his wit, he turned up the radio, which, to gall me, he kept tuned to Radio Moscow, and said: "We are going to listen about the American aggression against Afghanistan. The Communists, they are abusing Bwana Jeff's country." I laughed and Wamboi scolded me: "It is not good, to abuse your own country." In profile she too, heavily pregnant now, looked like an ostrich—a bigger one than Lesu. This was funny only until I began truly to appreciate her situation.

THE DAY OF THE ECLIPSE APPROACHED. AGONGO WAS caught up in the thrill of it more than anyone else. He saw in it, obscurely, a vindication of his schooling. Furiously, with his rainbow chalk, he drew solar systems and orbits. He lined up mangoes and oranges and tomatoes. "Now, consider," he said to my third-formers, interrupting an English class in which we were bulldozing our way through Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. "Consider that the earth is a mango." And so on. The whole class nodded its head. That's what students do. Teachers in Africa are authority figures, and authority figures are not challenged. Once, though, an impudent Moslem boy named Abdallah raised his hand and, swiping the mango, waved it in front of Agongo. "*Mwalimu*," he said. "If this is the earth, what will happen when someone is moving to eat?" And he bit into the earth, right through the tough green skin. One of the delights of life in Africa is not quite knowing when people are joking. The whole class laughed and, seeing me laughing, laughed harder. Everyone but Agongo laughed. His dignity was on the line. And now an-

other boy asked me: "*Mwalimu*. I can understand this geometry. But there is one thing I am not understanding. Right now it is daytime, isn't it?" It was.

"But then you say right now in your country it is nighttime. How is this possible? Myself, I can think only of one thing at a time."

At this Agongo swept up the fruits and vegetables—he left the bitten mango—and walked out, saying through his teeth, "Ach! You are all ignorant, too too ignorant!"

I shrugged. It was the same old question of pedagogy. I wanted to be socratic in an authoritarian system. Agongo wanted students to listen; I wanted them to question, as well. But this method would carry me down dead ends of passivity where, gracelessly, it would stall. Example: "How," I said in regard to the eclipse, "is it possible for day to be night?"

Silence. Silence. Then: "It is not possible."

"How is it possible that sunset will come four hours after sunrise?"

"We think it is not possible." How is it possible, they may well have been thinking, that the *mzungu* teacher speaks in riddles? Surely this was the way of old men—old African men. And one didn't answer them. One waited.

"Come on. Think. How's it possible that sunrise will come again only three minutes after sunset, which will come four hours after sunrise?"

"It is not possible. Tell us, *mwalimu*."

"It is possible and it will happen! Animals will be confused! Cocks will crow out of hour! Stars will come out and the sky will be black as night! And we'll all be there to see it. Yes, Kanuthia?"

"It is good, *mwalimu*. But Mr. Lesu—he is not believing."

Oh, Lesu! How couldn't he believe? A man of science and history, educated at a seminary, a man more or less of the West. We wondered, or at least Agongo and I did, if his brain was addled—too many "errands" into town, too many nimble trips past the market, ostensibly on his way to the PO, his overlarge, sandaled feet swacking the dust. He was incorrigibly erudite, and wanted people to know it. He read Latin—quoted Cicero after two drinks, Plotinus after four, and Ovid all the time. "The words of Cato, Williamson, according to the great Marcus Tullius Cicero: 'It is better to have cruel enemies than soft friends.' Now that one is a paradox, isn't it? Think about it. Yes." He laughed, and the children who trailed mischief in the marketplace followed him, calling out, "Kojak! Eee, Kojak!"

You see, there was one TV in the place, along the one and only road, at the army barracks not far from town.

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE SATURDAY OF THE ECLIPSE Wamboi became engaged to Thoko, a village carpenter who'd done some work for us at the school. She was to be his second wife, and so the match wasn't ideal for her, but considering the circumstances it was good

enough. Choices narrowed quickly for a woman in her position. Thoko possessed, in addition to his carpentry shop, a truck and a real farm, where he grew onions, cassava, and beans for lucrative markets in distant Nairobi. His courtship of Wamboi was, to say the least, unspectacular. Her family was not involved. Where was her family? There was no dowry, no negotiation, no service. This was sad, in light of what African ceremonies can be.

On the day she was to be picked up, Wamboi came to me. "Williamson," she said, "I want to tell you one thing."

"Sure. Anything."

"You know Njoroge, that small brown boy working always for Mr. Lesu?" I knew him.

"His parents, they are very far away." I waited. Wamboi looked at the ground.

"In fact that boy is my cousin. He is knowing everything about Lesu—" here Wamboi looked at me, then looked quickly away—"every little thing. But Lesu says he will be beaten—the boy, I mean."

"But Wamboi—"

"Williamson. To be beaten for the truth: it is not a good thing, is it?"

"But what can I do?" In those days I felt absolved by my foreignness from making value judgments—or from acting on them, in any case. Before Wamboi could answer my lame question, a horn blasted in the yard, close. It was Thoko, her husband-to-be. His pickup, an orange Datsun he used for taxiing people among the several villages of the area, was painted with Swahili proverbs and cautionary slogans in lurid turquoise. The effect of the color scheme was that of a Howard Johnson's ad campaign run amok. *Heri uchawi kuliko fitina!* Even witchcraft is better than argument! *Maneno hayatulishi!* Big talk doesn't feed us! For a people who profess such disdain for argument, the Africans sure make a lot of noise. And here was Thoko leaning on the horn, again and again. There wasn't much romance to the elopement. Thoko had brought along in the passenger's seat a grim woman, whom I recognized as his first wife. The look on her face as I carried Wamboi's pitifully light bag confirmed everything I had ever suspected, and African husbands hotly denied, about their women's view of polygamy.

When Thoko saw me, he hurried out of the cab to shake my hand, taking Wamboi's bag. "Hello, *mzee*," he greeted me, using the Swahili honorific for an old man. It occurred to me that in Thoko—awkward, tall, uneducated, and successful—Wamboi had found a healthy negative of Lesu. "We go take one beer in town, isn't it, *mzee*? I want treat you well so many month now." These words, and a curt shake of his head, were a cue for the grim woman to move silently from the cab to the bed of the pickup, with Wamboi. And so we drove into town, Thoko talking a streak of pidgin English and Swahili as we rattled through banana fields, the eerie purple snow of jacaranda blossoms collecting on the windshield of the Datsun—we dropped into town, as the villagers were fond of saying, as if people were rain.

Thoko was knowledgeable in that peculiarly African way. Of course he knew his crops and his carpentry, but with me he wanted to talk America. He knew his facts. At the slightest provocation he would list the first twenty-four American Presidents, stopping at the assassination of McKinley (the twentieth century gave him trouble). "Now, Williamson, please to educate me, *mzee*." His questions were perplexing. "The subway of New York City, is it not sinking? So much building over her head!" Or: "Tell me, a Hebrew he is look like what? Can I know him to see him?"

Now, parked outside the New Life Day & Night Club, Thoko pulled a bouquet of bills from his pocket and tossed them absently at his wife and wife-to-be. In we went to drink cheap, strong Kenyan beer.

Seeing me, the Africans in the place sat up a little straighter, plucking at the collars of their jackets. A few raised their glasses. Even though I didn't often go into bars (where I always ended up fuddled with beer, provoking glorious laughter in the crowd by my inability to recall that the capital of Mississippi is Jackson, like the great black Americans Reggie Jackson, Jesse Jackson, and George Jackson), still I was well known. Everyone in the village was well known. That's what it was all about.

Lesu was not at his habitual table in the corner. Thoko and I walked around greeting people. Africa is like a training school for politicians: you shake hands.

"*Mwalimu*. Tell us about this business of the *éclair*." Kathega worked at the Pentecostal church, sweeping up after the Holy Rollers and the Swedes. To him the eclipse had become the *éclair*, and nothing could change it back again.

"Gentlemen." I raised my glass. "Next Saturday morning the day will turn to night. The moon is getting in the way of the sun."

"Hey! The child is in the way of its parent!"

"A woman in the way of its husband!"

"Hey! Kathega!" the men said now. "Your woman, she doesn't get in the way, she runs away!" Kathega was for some reason always teased.

"Gentlemen. The feast is Saturday, at the school. The sun dies just after eleven."

"You know, Bwana Williamson," said a man in a Yankees cap, whose name, maddeningly, I couldn't recall, "the Masai will be fearing. Also the old people." Saying these things, he leaned back in his chair to wave over a beer for me. Already there were two unopened bottles next to my glass—big bottles, sixteen ounces. The Masai are pastoralists of the savanna who rarely come into the towns, and then rather condescendingly. Tall, proud people. "Ah, they will throw their spears at the sun directly. A Masai, he understands one thing only." The man whose name I forgot hefted his walking stick like a cudgel. Everyone laughed. More beer.

"Gentlemen, I want you to be our ministers of propaganda. The eclipse and the feast. Can you spread the word? I need you."

"A friend in need is a friend indeed. Drink a beer, mister. Drink a beer and listen."

I obeyed. They ran down the list of those who would be invited to the Party for the Dying of the Sun. All the chiefs and elders would come, hunting wine and talk and merriment. Kiganjo, the game warden, would come, and the Danish father and sister from the mission school, and Patel, the Indian merchant, with or without his daughters, but certainly without his wife, of whom he lived, as a good Indian husband should, in mortal fear. More beer, mister. Sukai, the medicine man, would bring his ragbag of fetishes and then claim the miracle for himself. Mwokavu, the market master, they would invite, and the girls from the *chai* shacks, and Okombe, the Anglican reverend, who mightn't come because the night girls were coming, but what was the worth of such dignity when life, after all, has to go on its own way? God never meant us to be proud. That was a misinterpretation. Beer, *mwalimu*! And what about Giseru, the crazy woman who prowled the town at night, laughing and chatting? Would they invite her? No, not that one. "That one, she is—what can I say?—a vampire searching for a victim. The sun goes out and *voom*, you are in her pocket."

Beer sprayed my face. African hospitality, I said to myself. You either avoid it or go all the way. Like skiing. Skiing! I laughed aloud. Forget it. Unopened bottles crowded my section of the table like torpedoes stockpiled for a long battle at sea. One by one I fired them. What else could I do? There I was, half a world between me and the motherland. The afternoon grew fuzzy around the edges. Later I remembered Thoko (who'd been silent since we came in—thinking, perhaps, about his new marital setup) blurt-ing to me, apropos of God knows what, "Williamson, who *really* are the sons of Ishmael?"

"Talk to Lesu," I said. "He's the ex-Jesuit."

Sunlight from the endless afternoon poured in through the door (all the windows were shuttered; drinking was for men, therefore secret), the African sky fluorescently pure, and when we finally waded out into this brightness, I felt, squinting my eyes, a sense not of interrogation but of belonging, of being at home. I was dead drunk. The Danish sister skittered by on her Moped and the four or five of us waved, calling out "*piki piki*!" From the opposite direction came three Masai herdsmen heading toward the cattle dip, loping up and down, up and down, in the walk that kids in junior high used to call, a million years ago and a million miles away, "pimping." These Masai warriors carried their long walking sticks wedged over their shoulders and behind their necks, like the crossbeams of crucifixes, their arms draped over. Their hair they wore long, waxed back with ocher into a sort of hard helmet at once gorgeous and, in the days of cattle raids, before the Pax Britannica washed over East Africa, functional. Jewelry everywhere. Sandals cut out of tires. They looked as savage as punks, though somewhat friendlier.

"*Soba!*" my drinking partners called out in the Masai language, a bit timidly, as the three passed. For centuries

in this corner of the world the planters have feared the herders. Too many raids. But I was foreign and dead drunk; I yelled, in heavy Americanese, "Hey, guys, how ya doin'?"

They laughed and waved, never breaking stride, spitting expertly into the sand. The interchange roused Thoko to ask, "In New York City, the Red Indians. They are allowed carrying spear in the very street? Or they are having a law?"

I didn't feel capable of answering this, so I stumbled on, slack-kneed, down the road. The brightness was already turning headachy. I scarcely looked at Thoko's women, still (or again?) in the back of that ridiculous pickup. "In Nairobi," their husband called after me, "they have got a law!"

Thank you, Thoko! I waved my hand without looking back. All this, I knew, was fodder for Lesu. But where, oh where, oh where *was* Lesu?

HE WAS OUT BEHIND HIS HOUSE, BEATING THE BOY Njoroge. Or getting ready to, at any rate. The boy was kneeling, and Lesu stood over him with a *kiboko*, the heavy hippo-tail lash used infamously by colonial administrators and their quislings. It was shiny and thick, like the plastic cable on office phones.

"What is this crap?" I said to Agongo as I watched through our window. "Let's do something."

But Agongo was having none of it. The man's mood was dark. The fizzle of his classroom demonstration was really bothering him. "You know, Jeffrey," he would say to me later on, "the African is truly an ignorant type of man." For the moment, though, he just sat there plaiting his hair in corn rows, as he did when he felt vicious, and lip-synching a Bob Marley tape he had put on the box in the bedroom. "Total destruction, the only solution," he sang.

"Okay, Rastaman. Might can take it easy, though." Out the cabin door I lurched.

It was a bold thing I was doing, approaching Lesu. I wasn't afraid of the little man, not at all, but how could I be critical of his private life? A foreigner. Presumptuous. But there was the boy on hands and knees, his face practically buried in a ferociously pink bougainvillea plant. He was shirtless, and wore his indigo school knickers low on the waist. He was as thin as anyone else.

"Bwana Lesu!" I said.

"Yes?"

Not knowing what to say next, I stuck out my hand. Lesu had to shift the *kiboko* from right hand to left armpit in order to shake.

"Have we been parted so long we greet each other like brothers?" he said. "Anyway, it is good. 'How good it is for men to act like brothers! How beautiful it is!' Psalms? But I forget the Bible, Williamson. It escapes me. This boy, he has been very bad."

"What did he do?"

"This boy? He has done so much, even I can't begin to

describe." Here Lesu winced, shaking his head and saying "*tsk tsk tsk*"—those clicks of wonder with which the villagers greeted, say, a picture of Manhattan, or of Raquel Welch, or of a nuclear explosion. "Very bad, oh, yes. He must be beaten."

"But the *kiboko*, Lesu? It's so bloody primitive. I mean, I look out the window and see the flowers, the mountain, and that bloody thing. It just doesn't mesh."

"Okay, then," he said, tipping a smile at me. "You know, I am becoming a liberal man. Like Bwana Jimmy Carter. No one will vote for me." Then he dropped the strap like a garden hose, and in a clean motion pulled off his belt.

"Lesu, Lesu, Lesu." It seemed important that the boy escape unwhipped. "Such a beautiful day in your country!"

He eyed me closely, then burst out laughing. "Williamson! You are drunk! Yes, yes, in fact you are completely useless! My God!"

There. I'd struck a responsive chord. "African hospitality," I slurred.

"In that case"—Lesu threw down his belt and took my hand, grinning like an accomplice—"let us take a stroll through my garden. We can discuss."

And so, leaving the boy, we went down among the maize, the yams, the bananas. There was no apparent order to his planting—things grew where seeds fell—but yield was high. Lesu came from a tribe of agricultural wizards. His maize grew taller than most. I kept losing my direction, and regaining it by looking up to find the mountain. As we walked, Lesu picked things with his right hand and, frowning, tossed them aside, while with his left hand he clutched at his pants.

"Look, Williamson, now I am losing my pants. How can I farm with a single hand? Now. Is it the fault of the belt, which remained idly at the compound? Or is it the fault of gravity? Answer."

"Gravity." I was tired.

"Then I say to you it is the fault of Sir Isaac Newton, who invented gravity. Now you say, Did he invent or simply discover? And I say, My friend—if there is no theory for a thing, that thing does not exist. This is physics, bwana. Einstein. I know these things. So. A small African man named Lesu loses his pants in a field, and this is what Isaac Newton was knighted for."

"Well."

"Irony of history, Williamson."

"Lesu. My head hurts."

"And you know, my ancestors, they were wearing skirts—beautiful skirts. Did they fall down? No. Did they cause such sweating? Nothing. But then you have replaced them with these useless things." He wiggled two fingers in disgust at his own khakis. "I mean the collective you, of course. The *Wazungu*."

"Lesu. If you're such a man of science, why all the noise about the eclipse? You know, Einstein's on my side."

Lesu waved this away, and his pants slid down over his hips. He clutched them up again. I caught a flash of blue





bikini underwear. Very chic. "Look," he said. "I am revealed, like a woman."

"Then go back to your robes, or skirts, why don't you?"

"Okay. Fine, I will—if every other damn fool will too. You see? Now we are discussing loss of innocence. Loss of paradise. It is a Christian parable, isn't it? But then again you have given us the parable, too. Puzzle within puzzle, dream within dream. The boy, he is very bad. He must be punished."

"Lesu. Let's make a deal. If the eclipse comes off Saturday, like I say, you let the boy go. If it doesn't, the boy works for you in the field."

This wasn't much of a deal, since the boy was already working like a slave for Lesu. In any case, my colleague didn't seem to hear me. He was repeating his own words, tasting them. Puzzle within puzzle. Dream within dream. I was surprised to see through the frantic banana trees that we had come full circle, back to Lesu's house. Incredibly, Njoroge was still there, kneeling.

"So. Do we have a bet?"

"*Tsk tsk tsk.*" Lesu smiled at me. "Drunk in the middle of the afternoon, and now gambling. Completely useless. A fallen *mzungu*."

"In my country, we call it putting your money where your mouth is."

"Yes, I know. Your people are very fat, they must have a lot of money. Also big mouths."

"Deal, Lesu?"

He nodded. It was a very nice day, he admitted, and he was inclined to hope for peace among all people. But the boy, he added, was very bad. "A real criminal, in fact."

SLOWLY AT FIRST, AND THEN IN A FLOOD, AGONGO won converts. As the eclipse approached, he revved the school like an engine. "What is the shadow called?" he said, pointing a finger skyward, and the faithful yelled back, "Umbra, sir!" In the morning, crossing the dewy lawn toward school, I could hear them, all two hundred of them in the assembly room, Kikuyu and Luo and Masai and Chagga alike, all shouting "Eclipse! Umbra! Penumbra! Solar!" (which they pronounced *solah*). Agongo was satisfied. "Good," he said, nodding his head as the students veered into morning hymn. The favorite of those days was "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus."

In town we spread the word about our feast, and I went to the shops to cadge more film. Patel, the Indian trader, had a shipment of T-shirts just in from Nairobi. KENYA'S SOLAR ECLIPSE! they screamed in bold, smudged letters. According to the truck driver, the capital was full of European tourists, European photographers, European scientists. "Expahts," he called them—meaning either experts or expatriates. Patel was thrusting shirts at me. "I give you one absolutely free," he said.

"Free?"

"Free absolutely, with these sunglasses." Ever since I'd bought a ridiculously expensive Korean flashlight from

him, he'd figured me for a sucker. Americans, as every Greek, Lebanese, and Indian merchant in Africa knows, are pathetic bargainers. We seem to feel a special obligation to be ripped off, everywhere we go. Now Patel was waving in front of me his flimsy sunglasses—Ray Charles specials.

"No thanks, Patel," I said.

"You will look like a musician—very smart. My goodness."

"Really, Patel, no thanks!"

"Plus you look at the eclipse harmlessly."

"Are you kidding, Patel? I'll send you the eye doctor's bill."

"In that case, I put the sunglasses away and sell you a flashlight—improved. And very cheap, my goodness, yes."

In those last few days there was a sweep of excitement through the town. People believed! Things hadn't been this lively, the people said, since national elections, two

PRIVACY

So what if I outsmarted a fish
I found beautiful and didn't need to eat?
The pickerel's mouth was around the hook—
another instant he'd bite and be torn.
I jiggled a warning down the line,
and he backed off quick and smooth.

Across the pond a woman came down,
waded in so far and stopped,
but kept throwing out a stick
for her dog to return
while light off the water
dappled up her thighs.

She thought she was alone
so I turned away.

I remember how my father always entered the water
shyly, carefully wetting his skin
like a shepherd smearing an orphaned lamb
with another ewe's blood so she'd claim it.
Once he swam out so far alone, he didn't
know the way back when dark surprised him.
Then someone on shore he never met,
thinking of something else,
flicked on a light and he didn't drown.

—David Williams

years earlier, when a caravan of Mercedes had swished into town and the Big Bull himself had gotten out, his drivers and assistants brushing dust off his sleeves. African politicians are fond of the perks. All around town the Big Bull walked, greeting the people, laughing, shaking their hands, and passing out twenty-shilling notes from a fat wad in his breast pocket—spreading the wealth. All bars were open, all drinks on him, all day. His pictograph on the parliamentary ballots was, naturally, a robust bull, while his opponents had been assigned snakes, vultures, warthogs, and the like. It is good to be wealthy, the Swahili say.

Our eclipse couldn't rank with this legendary patronage, but we tried. With rolls of film we wandered through the market, showing the mamas how to look, and what to look for. Like schoolgirls lost in massive, borrowed bodies, they glanced at one another and then, on cue, burst out laughing. What silly things the *mzungu*, a grown man, was doing! Agongo's fruit-and-veggie demonstration was performed everywhere—you could see the earth as mango, as yam and cabbage, even as banana, even as chicken claw—and each time, the mamas, sitting there splay-legged and immobile over their half-woven baskets, gave that laugh of ridicule and, faintly, of respect.

Agongo was transported by pride. He came from this place, had gone away and had returned to it, and he wanted above all to be respected in it, as his father and grandfather had been before him. The earth a banana? Who cared?

Meanwhile, Lesu seemed to slip further and further into an obscure, dismal funk. His habitual wry cheer evaporated, leaving him frowning and licking his lips. In class he was alternately lax and short-tempered. Two or three expelled students regularly stood at the classroom door, quizzical sentinels, as he ranted and raved like Macbeth within. Immediately after lessons he rushed to the New Life, kicking up a storm of dust, stopping to talk to no one along the way.

His reputation among the people was in a state of flux, headed down. Word about the philandering and the missing money had gotten round, and this might have pushed Lesu to the bottle. *I didn't know. But I felt sorry for him.* He was coming undone. Sooner or later people would start to talk.

It was at this point that Wamboi, now stupendously pregnant, showed up at Lesu's house two days running. I knew enough about local attitudes to realize that these visits were strange indeed. She must have walked the three or four miles from Thoko's compound to see her former lover. He had been her lover, hadn't he? He must have been. In any case, she was taking real risks. I watched her talking in the garden with her cousin Njoroge, who, as far as I could tell, had moved in with Lesu as some sort of houseboy. It seemed he had no other place to go. Wamboi talked with great animation, waving her arms, pointing at Lesu's house, clapping her hands together. I wanted to hear what she was saying, but when I ventured out she became meek and blank. She greeted me and wandered off.

Lesu wasn't home. We found him, Agongo and I, in his corner of the bar, drumming away with his fingers on the table. "Williamson! Buy me one beer!" he called out—a cheerful command. "You are a rich white man from the country which took my people as slaves. So buy me beer."

Impoliteness is scrutinized in Africa, even in bars. The place grew a little quiet. Lesu grabbed his beer from the bartender, along with the bottle opener. The opener was attached by a string to the bartender's belt loop, and this caused the man to be jerked heavily into our table. Lesu snorted with contempt and, turning around, raised his beer toward the photo of the president high on the wall—the obligatory mug shot that stares out over every shop, every office, everywhere.

"And there is another great capitalist," Lesu said, wetly bitter. "One of the biggest criminals."

Dead quiet in the bar. This just wasn't done. In the city people were jailed and beaten for less.

Leaning over, Agongo whispered in Lesu's ear.

"No. You are silly, bwana," Lesu answered aloud. "It is a compliment. If I myself could be a criminal, I would do it big style. We are in fact a dog-eat-dog society, and unfortunately I am a small puppy."

And about Wamboi's visit? Well. Lesu wanted us to hear a little story. It seems a woman, dissatisfied with her husband, went off on an adventure with a rabbit. They went to the rabbit's place, but the woman wasn't happy with the accommodations. A hole in the ground is a hole in the ground. Nor did she like the grasses that were the main course of the feast. Let's go to my house, the woman said, and I will fix a real feast. The rabbit agreed, and back they went. No sooner had the woman put a pot of water on the fire to boil than she heard her husband returning from the fields. Seizing the rabbit by his tender ears, she threw him into the pot and clamped down the lid just in time to greet her husband at the door: Husband, I have caught and cooked a rabbit for you!

"You see," Lesu concluded. "A woman is never satisfied. Now. Buy me one beer. I have not yet beaten that small boy. . ."

Later, in the twilight, Agongo and I drifted up from town, past the school, where students were tossing the Frisbee I'd given them. "Sah, sah, can you make the flying disc spin?" I told Agongo that I thought Wamboi was suffering unfairly. Why didn't she just blow the whistle on Lesu—accuse him?

"A woman?" Agongo said. "She cannot do that to him. No one can listen."

"So what *can* she do?"

"She has only to wait. Listen, Jeffrey. These people, even when they are not saying anything, they are saying something. Lesu has ears." He waved his arm across the horizon. Up and up we walked, through maize fields and through pastures where flat-topped acacia trees stood looking burdened, not unhappily, with the weight of the sky. No one who's been to East Africa can forget those trees. They have character, like people you've admired.

We took dinner at Agongo's parents' home. We sat around the fire talking about the big day, and of course Agongo had to draw his planets in the dirt with a stick. Indefatigable Rastaman! The old man, laughing, promised to bring a goat and a drum. I don't beat my children, I don't beat my wives, I don't beat my drum, he was saying—Agongo translating freely. I *play* my drum. I *caress* my drum. "And when the Masai sees the darkness, he will start to bring his cattle home to the *manyatta*. Hey, he will think it is evening. He will be quite confused."

Was it that night when, homebound under a sky low and moonless, we heard suspicious rustlings in the maize stalks off to our right? Agongo played the flashlight over the field. The sweep of the beam seemed to catch, only for a second, a pair of eyes—an instant of malevolence, gone.

"What the hell was that?"

"It could be perhaps a *chui*."

A what? A leopard? "A *what*?"

"Just continue walking."

Oh, great, great. A leopard. These things didn't bother Agongo. Well. "Agongo. I don't want to be eaten."

"Continue walking."

"Look. There's no good meat on a *mzungu*. I'm serious."

Out of the maize into open land, with no surprises. We saw, three miles above us, the great mountain—House of God, as it was known in legend—the broad, snow-wrinkled band of its extinct volcano shining like the forehead of one who has been blessed. Where had that moon come from, and those stars? Stars upon stars upon stars. Would it really be like this on the day-night of our eclipse?

We talked again only upon reaching the school compound. Languages, I've found, clash everywhere, but silences mesh. A light was on at Lesu's, and looking in, we could see our colleague sprawled on his couch, dead asleep. A Chinese kerosene lamp burned on the table, hissing faintly amid a still life of bananas, paperbacks, whisky tumblers, and a quill pen Lesu was ostentatiously fond of using. The sense of voyeuristic elation was strong. As we watched, the boy Njoroge tiptoed in, barefoot, and turned the lamp way down. He did not look at the figure sleeping, mouth open, on the couch.

We walked away. "Lesu is not a bad man," Agongo said. "But he is like the *kiboko*—what do you call that? Hippopotamus. He is like the hippo. Harmless, unless you get between him and his river—the bar. Then he becomes quite savage."

We laughed. No need to fear leopards here, out in the clear and wide. Seeing Agongo's teeth flash in the moonlight, I remembered his trouble with ice cream cones. We had stopped at a Safari Freeze in Nairobi, after a tortured bus ride from our village. My roommate had winced and shivered, biting into the ice cream. Later he threw the cone away—the "box," he called it. Unfit for a goat.

"What are you laughing, bwana?" he said now.

A lamp was flickering in the school. "Look," I said.

It was late, no reason for anyone to be in the building. Mindless as moths, we drifted toward the light. Voices.

Agongo tensed. He'd seen too many BRUCE LEE: KING OF KUNG FU T-shirts, had practiced too many karate kicks, to let this moment pass.

There, in the Form Four classroom, crowded round a single dim lamp that pulsed monstrous shadows on the walls, half a dozen of our ablest students sat rehearsing—drawing constellations of moons like soap bubbles on old rags of cardboard (they had no paper to speak of) and repeating, as if it were an incantation:

"Umbra! Penumbra! Umbra! Penumbra!"

ECLIPSE! THE TOWN EMPTIED ITSELF UPWARD toward our school. Students and villagers jammed the soccer field. Agongo's father and his ancient cronies did indeed bring their drums—hollowed logs, goatskins stretched over gourds—and the singing began. Girls filed by carrying bundles of wood on their heads, a tribute to African posture. A bonfire was in the making. Boys with *panga*, those cruel machetes ubiquitous in East Africa, stood eyeing three goats tethered to the soccer goalpost. Everything was set for a big feast. But where was Lesu?

Under the far soccer goalpost Sukai, the old medicine man, had spread out a great cowhide on which he was meticulously arraying his magic charms: teeth, feathers, bottle caps, locks of hair, old English coins, safety pins, matchbooks, chicken bones. Mustard-colored powders in vials furry with grease. A few blurred Polaroids. He hummed to himself, arranging and rearranging. With these fetishes lassoed to the power of the eclipse, he would perform some heavy medicine. Agongo had told me of at least half a dozen people, Thoko among them, who hoped to have their lives improved in particular aspects physical, financial, or marital when the sun went out.

Agongo and I went from group to group, greeting and thanking people, taking pictures with my Nikon. "*Mwalimu!* Please to strike one picture here!" Girl students begged for pictures, laughing hysterically and grabbing our elbows but then turning suddenly grim as they posed by the school entrance, formally, their maroon school sweaters dulled by the red of the poinsettias in the flower beds. Patel, the merchant, mumbling "My goodness!" in abject fear of his wife, rushed to get out of a picture that, he realized, would record him for posterity with some of the ladies from the New Life Bar. He didn't escape. The women laughed, throwing back their heads, which they'd left uncovered—a bold stroke. The other women wore bright scarves.

In the absence of Lesu, the boy Njoroge became animated. There was an avocado tree behind the school, and this Njoroge climbed, accelerating up the trunk like a chameleon, all claws and back. He was, in fact, a prodigious tree climber. Our students gathered, cheering Njoroge as he made his way up and out along the thinnest branches. "*Ndege! Ndege ruha!*" they yelled—Fly away, bird! Had we ever seen Njoroge smile before?

But where was Lesu the diminutive, the skeptical, the antagonist?

"He is afraid of our eclipse." Agongo watched his watch. "He is humiliated, so he stays in the bar. Remember, he is the hippo. But he tells himself he is making a big political statement." My roommate pulled me up beside him, high on the stump of a tree. Miles and miles I could see down the mountain's gentle shoulder, past maize locked in golden grids to the savannas where Masai followed their herds in the eternal search for pasture, for water. I found myself struck dumb by this splendor, while Agongo, by my side, launched into the prolonged throat-clearings and tonsil-rumblings that prefaced all his speeches. In English, his third or possibly his fourth language, he was a declaimer, a gesturer—yes, a bit of a pedant.

But before he could say anything, a student in the throng yelled, "Look! Look! It is beginning!"

And so it was. Hundreds of strips of black film whipped skyward, as if a tremendous bug had opened an eye of a thousand facets. It all seemed rehearsed—as, in a sense, it was. The drums stopped talking; in the astonished silence you could hear the breeze and the churn of the maize mill from town and the three goats stupidly bleating, unable to muster dignity even at the hour of their doom. The sun, when I looked at it, had a small smooth bite gone, like a baby's mango.

"Penumbra!" the people shouted.

"Penumbra!" Agongo raised a finger. Phase one.

Some of the old men pulled flashlights from under their robes and started waving them around wildly. Njoroge dropped from the tree and landed on all fours, grinning. Things were transformed in the eerie three-quarter light. A breeze picked up; the bite out of the sun grew larger. But who was it taking that bite, anyway? My students would ask this question.

"Penumbra!"

"Penumbra!"

The air cooled as the light waned. Someone noticed that our midday shadows were melting away beneath us, and there was a buzz of discovery as people danced around, trying to get out of the way of their own feet in order to see. "Ladies and gentlemen!" I called out, a barker at a circus. "A tremendous shadow is hurtling across Africa, west to east, like the swing of a great *panga*!"

Well. I was a little carried away. I sounded like Carl Sagan. Agongo's arm came around my shoulder. We could no longer see the Masai down on the plains, and their circular corrals were faint blemishes on the dun face of the land. Now gone. The horizon flared rose and fuchsia on all sides, the mountain's embrace turning angry, tufted clouds springing from nowhere all along the rim of the world. Up close, details faded. The sky above was a deepening blue.

"*Nyota!*" A star! A single star!

Little boys and aged grandfathers played flashlights recklessly—really it was not that dark yet—as Agongo readied two fingers for the umbra, the Chorus of Total Darkness. We were ready. We knew. In the darkness laid

upon light by God and modern physics we, a family, would be there to call forth light.

The fire jumped. The mountain glowered. Agongo raised his hand—

"But *mwalimu*! Look! It is getting light again!"

"The dark is not coming, but light!"

"No! No! Hey! You are missing!"

"Look, bwana! Look at that sun and you tell me!"

"It is not possible."

"Just look up, my friend. If you do not see it, you are just another ostrich."

Was it true? I rubbed my eyes, blinking real tears, not at these heresies but because of smoke from the fire. The sun was still a sliver, but a shrinking or a growing sliver?

A rooster crowed. Another. Chorus of Total Roosters.

The star was gone.

"Williamson." Agongo at my sleeve, whispering. "Williamson."

"Don't look now," I said, "but it seems to be morning."

And so it was. What had happened to our night?

People tossed questions in half a dozen languages. Agongo handled them. Where was the umbra? Who stole the darkness? What now? "Where, in point of fact," said Kathega, the most teased man in town, "was the actual *éclair*?"

My own disappointment surprised me, but it was as a small hut to the gothic towers of misery that shadowed my roommate. His face was falling apart. I tried to help. "Well, folks," I said. "Looks like we were outside the umbra zone."

"Umbra! Umbra!"

"Yes. But we were outside. We missed." My turn to draw planets now, but where? Where? The ground had beaded mysteriously with water—mother earth's tears of shame for Agongo—and the cows in the fields bellowed a mockery. Everything confirmed the failure of our education. I thought Agongo would weep. "Come on, Rastaman," I said. "Endure we might can do, no?"

And just then, as the villagers shuffled around, unsure of what to do not only with their disappointment, which would pass, but with their goats, fire, music—just then Lesu arrived. He was striding up to the field, dramatically etched in dappled, tree-blown light from his now full sun, and a few students rushed to him as disciples to their leader. Little Judases! With each step as he climbed the small slope he pushed off, hands on his knees—a man weary with righteousness. His sacred text—his skepticism—had been vindicated.

Had he known all along? Out-researched our research? I wondered about this as the antagonist stopped, scratched his head, and looked around distractedly, damn his nonchalance, by the goalpost. There the shaman stood with his fetishes. Lesu picked up a bone. I half expected him to claim that he'd aborted our eclipse himself, with a little help from the conjurer. Up he would come, flecking flakes at me off his damnable head, grinning. *So, bwana. I believe you said it would be black as night?*

At the very least, I'd be in debt for a lot of beer—I, the white colon, the "European," the imperialist who enslaved Africans so that my people could walk on the moon! This was the kind of logic that was winning out.

Njoroge turned and ran out of Lesu's sight, thinking no doubt about that *kiboko*. But it was Lesu's house he ran to. Paradox within paradox.

The little man would be merciless. He was drunk, too. Swaying in his boots like a midget eucalyptus tree feeling the mountain breeze, he stood before me. "What happened here?" he said.

"Lesu. First. An American isn't a European, do you understand? It's like saying Augustine was an East African. Augustine, Lesu!"

"What has happened?"

"We were a little outside the umbra, that's all. Missed by a few miles. That's all." I spoke loudly. The faces crowded around us belonged to people who sent their children five, six, seven miles a day, on foot, to be educated in a language they themselves didn't even know. If that wasn't faith, what was? When I'd first arrived in this place, these same village children had followed me in the road for weeks, calling out "*Simba! Simba!*"—Lion!—because of my great hairy face and great hairy arms and legs. Turn around and poof, they'd be gone.

"Bwana Lesu," I said, declaiming. "By a freak chance you've won our little wager—"

What was it in his face that stopped me? He wasn't listening, wasn't smirking. He brushed aside my words and pushed his froggy face, beaded with inordinate sweat, close to mine, making the public private. He had to stand on his tiptoes to do this.

"Williamson." He spoke into my ear. "I am coming from Wamboi. She has given birth. It is a boy."

He pulled back, smiling. Now it seemed everyone was smiling. But how did they know? What could they be thinking?

Lesu stared at me, suddenly as intense as a zealot, and poked himself in the chest. "I have never had a son," he said. "But you know that, don't you, Williamson?" He radiated a glow of paternity, greasy and fierce, as he stood

there swaying on his toes. Was he going to vomit? Was I? "Williamson. I have played ducks and drakes with this life too too long."

The sun battered my neck. I needed to sit. Lesu nodded and walked off toward the goats. From somewhere he produced a mammoth *panga*. Maybe someone handed it to him—he never stopped moving. Quickly he flipped the largest goat over on its side and crouched over it. Small boys, hurrying to get in on the action, grabbed the goat's ankles. Its voice blooped frantically. Half lover, half doctor, with a deftness so tender it left me numb, Lesu slit the animal's throat ear to ear.

Music had begun. Dancers stomped their shadows into the ground. I found myself escorted toward the avocado shade by solicitous students leading me like an invalid, by the arms. They were concerned for my health. Perhaps I had eaten something funny, they said. So so far from home. I looked for a place among the mashed avocados.

"Now, *mwaliimu*," they said. "You sit here." They sat around me, boys and girls comfortable with each other, laughing with each other, not at all as we were at that age. They were talking—in English, for my benefit—about the failure of our eclipse. Here is what they said:

"You know, *mwaliimu*, the sun is a tricky being. Perhaps it was just moving some slight bit to the north. Even the south."

"Yes. In fact, *mwaliimu*, the sun has been abusing people for such a long time, isn't it? When we have too much sun, hey, this place is dust—nothing but dust."

"Then I think you will go home to New Jersey City, and leave this dry place!"

They laughed. I looked at the people dancing.

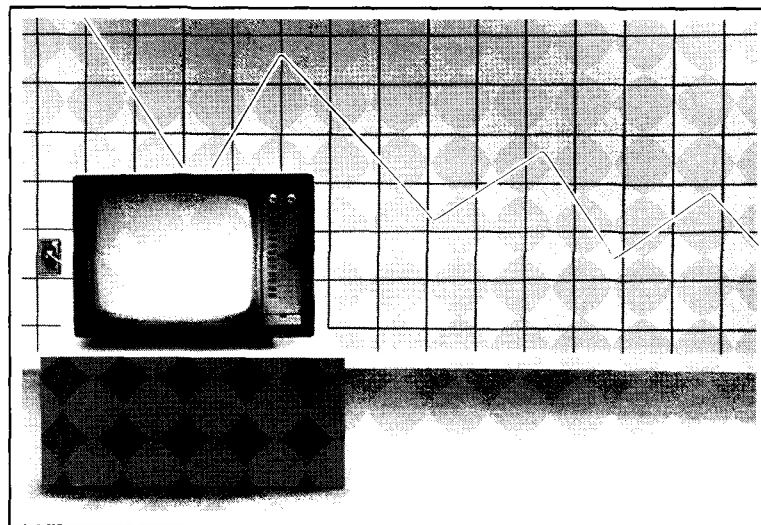
"But in fact, *mwaliimu*, this darkness is not a good thing anyway. In the middle of the day like this? Hey, bwana, you wake up after those few minutes, you find your wife has changed into a cat. Any funny thing can happen."

"Yes, *mwaliimu*. In fact, the darkness, we were not even wanting it."

"Yes, *mwaliimu*. Sit here and we will tell you every last thing about the darkness." □



NETWORK TELEVISION ISN'T GETTING THE RECEPTION IT USED TO.



Everyone used to watch network television because there wasn't much else to watch. But the picture has changed.

Now there are cable channels, video games and home computers to distract network viewers. A recent study shows the networks' prime-time audience has dropped 17% in the last eight years. At that rate, their audience share will sink to 60% by 1990.

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MAGAZINES REACH PEOPLE YOU CAN'T GET THROUGH ORDINARY CHANNELS.

*A report on a discipline riven with
epistemological doubt on the one hand and rigid formalism on the other*

THE POVERTY OF ECONOMICS

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

EVENTS HAVE BEEN UNKIND TO THE ECONOMY, AND unkind still to economists. Twenty years ago the age-old problem of boom and bust seemed to have been solved; the ideological schisms that had long plagued economics had been melded into a “neoclassical synthesis” that reconciled the classical economics of the invisible hand with the inspired heresies of John Maynard Keynes. In the 1961 edition of his famous textbook Paul Samuelson could write with some confidence that the body of neoclassical theory “is accepted in its broad outlines by all but a few extreme left-wing and right-wing writers.”

During the 1970s the world’s industrial economies not only faltered but faltered in ways that confounded received theory. As the economy became the paramount political issue in country after country, economists gained notoriety and lost their compass. The business community, a principal consumer of economic forecasting, became increasingly skeptical about the ability of economists to call the turns in the economy. Governments found economists urging politically suicidal austerities.

Within the profession itself the consensus of the sixties fragmented into Chicago monetarists, post-Keynesians, neo-Marxists, neo-institutionalists, neo-Austrians, and a new fundamentalist strain, the rational-expectations school. Since 1970 an outpouring of serious and ideologically diverse articles and books has pronounced that economics is in a state of severe, perhaps terminal, crisis. Some titles convey the sentiments: *The Crisis in Economic Theory*, *Economists at Bay*, *What’s Wrong With Economics*, *The Irrelevance of Conventional Economics*, *Why Economics Is Not Yet a Science*, *Dangerous Currents: The State of Economics*, even a scholarly article titled “Let’s Take the Con Out of Econometrics.”

One hears critical comments not only from Samuelson’s “extreme left-wing and right-wing writers” but also in annual addresses by incoming presidents of the American Economic Association. Yet despite the apparent soul-searching, the teaching of economics, the hiring of young economists and the granting of tenure, the financing of research, and the pages of prestigious “refereed” journals all evidence deep resistance to change.

Neoclassical economics, the reigning school, marries the assumptions of the classical invisible hand—the prin-

ciple of a self-regulating economy—to the Keynesian insight that macroeconomic stabilization by government is necessary to keep the clockwork operating smoothly. In method, standard economics is highly abstract, mathematical, and deductive, rather than curious about institutions. Neoclassical economic theory posits an economic system of “perfect competition.” All transactions in the economy are likened to those that occur in simple marketplaces, like fish markets, in which prices rise or fall exactly enough to move the merchandise. As economists say, adjustment of price based on supply and demand serves to “clear the market.” That is, if there is an oversupply of herring on a given day, the shrewd fishmonger will lower his price; otherwise the market will fail to clear and the fish will rot. If there is high demand for lobster but short supply, the fishmonger will raise his price; otherwise there will be too many willing buyers. From this stylized picture of a small market, standard economics projects a “general equilibrium” that is said to characterize the entire economy. Perfect competition, in a sleight of epistemological hand, is said to describe the best possible as well as the actual world.

The model also assumes that markets are composed of many sellers and many buyers, who individually have too little market power to dictate prices or to manipulate choices, and can only offer or accept bids. As economists say, each seller is a price taker, not a price maker—for otherwise there could not be perfect competition.

Perfect competition requires “perfect information.” Consumers must know enough to compare products astutely; workers must be aware of alternative jobs, and capitalists of competing investment opportunities. Otherwise, sellers could charge more than a competitive price and get away with it, and workers could demand more than their services were worth. Moreover, perfect competition requires “perfect mobility of factors.” Workers must be free to seek the highest available wage, and capitalists to shift their capital to get the highest available return; otherwise, identical factors of production would command different prices, and the result would be a deviation from the model. Economists argue that monopoly prices or wages can’t last very long, because some entrepreneur soon perceives an opportunity, enters the market, and forces prices back into equilibrium.

The introduction of concrete social institutions like banks, corporations, currencies, and the modern state

Robert Kuttner is the author of, most recently, The Economic Illusion: False Choices Between Prosperity and Social Justice.

complicate only the details, not the fundamentals. Likewise, deviations from perfect competition in actual economic life require embellishments of the model, not a revision of its premises. With Keynes, standard theory conceded that disequilibria might intrude upon the economy as a whole, but it held that these could be remedied by judicious stabilization of aggregate demand—that is, combined government and consumer purchasing power.

The neoclassical model assumes that economic behavior is based on the concept of “marginal utility”: individual consumers express choices by continually calculating and refining their preferences “at the margin”—the point at which they have extra dollars of income or hours of time to spend—and firms likewise make adjustments at the margin to maximize their profits. We know these things by assumption and inference: an individual who did not maximize his well-being would be behaving irrationally, and a firm failing to maximize profits would fall by the wayside. In most models the state of technology is assumed to be constant, and so are cultural and institutional environments. Technological, cultural, and institutional changes that do occur over time result from individuals’ constantly adjusting their preferences at the margin. If individuals have cultural attachments, and motivations other than utility maximization, these are not of theoretical significance. Charles Schultze, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a recent president of the AEA, says, “When you dig deep down, economists are scared to death of being sociologists. The one great thing we have going for us is the premise that individuals act rationally in trying to satisfy their preferences. That is an incredibly powerful tool, because you can model it.”

When the standard model is presented in the classroom, an impertinent freshman invariably protests that it is plainly unrealistic. The professor has heard the complaint before. He tells the student that we must walk before we can run, that we must oversimplify for the sake of analytical clarity, and that after the student is more accomplished in analytic technique, refinements will be added to adjust the model to the nuances of economic reality. The model indeed becomes more elaborate, yet the basic assumptions persist. By then the student either will have decided that the entire exercise is unrewarding and moved on to history or sociology, or will have mastered the difficult mathematical proofs and acquired a certain fondness for deductive logic, as well as a professional loyalty to the discipline.

NEOCLASSICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS GROWS OUT OF the Enlightenment mentality, which substituted a scientific natural order for a metaphysical one. An invisible hand that shaped individual egoism into general harmony reconciled the Enlightenment predilections for personal liberty and natural laws. Adam Smith’s concept of equilibrium in market economics is also a variation on eighteenth-century Newtonian mechanics. Physics has

served ever since as a model to which economics should aspire.

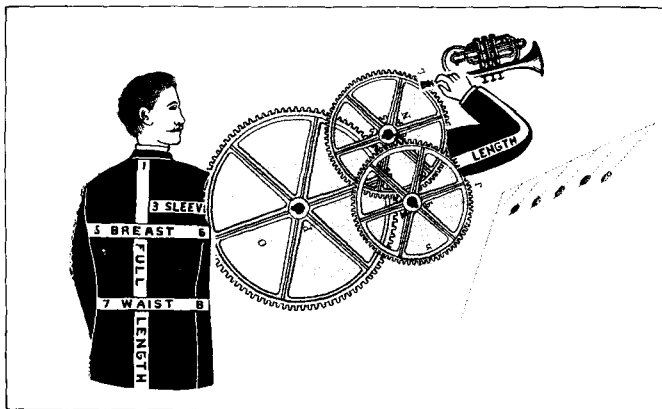
The difficulty is that economic phenomena are neither so universal nor so predictable as physical phenomena. If, for example, most actual markets do not automatically clear according to price, then standard economics is building elaborate models of a world that doesn’t exist. As Lester Thurow observed in *Dangerous Currents*, some markets, such as the stock market, do roughly bear out the classical assumption that markets clear on the basis of adjustment in price, while others, such as the market for labor, do nothing of the sort, and still others, such as the market for automobiles, are somewhere in between.

It is not unusual for laymen to fault academic experts for playing in a sandbox of abstraction, but such criticism is especially justifiable when it applies to economists, for they, unlike literary scholars, operate in two worlds. They are, as the radical economist Samuel Bowles once observed, both priests and engineers. Their sandbox is the economy. When economists are relied upon for practical advice, the consequences of faulty theory are real.

Of several major theoretical problems the most basic is that economic theory reasons deductively, from axioms. An axiom, said the English economist Peter Wiles, is “only a premise one is not allowed to question, dressed up as something grand.” The world of perfect competition posited by neoclassical economics may be so far from the world in which we live that it is not a useful basis for theory or policy advice. Certainly, if the world were literally like the theory, daily life would be anarchic. Thorstein Veblen wrote: “If, in fact, all the conventional relations and principles of pecuniary intercourse were subject to such a perpetual rationalized, calculating revision, so that each article of usage, appreciation, or procedure must approve itself *de novo* on hedonistic grounds of sensuous expediency . . . it is not conceivable that the institutional fabric would last overnight.”

By reasoning deductively from axioms economics confuses the normative with the descriptive. Theory stipulates, *a priori*, that perfect competition is both a description of the optimal world and a useful approximation of the actual world. When it is pointed out that high unemployment, or segmented labor markets, or oligopolistic corporations, or national economic-development strategies, or big public sectors, or regulated banks, or protected agricultural markets—or the logic of social organizations in general—suggest a world very far from the textbook picture of perfect competition and self-correcting markets, the economist has essentially two choices. He can turn pamphleteer, as so many economists do, and insist that the world would be a better place if it did conform to the textbooks. (As the Cambridge University economist John Eatwell has said, “If the world is not like the model, so much the worse for the world.”) Or he can scrap the formalism, get out of the office, and study the profane world of real institutions. There are some economists of this sort, but they are mostly of an older generation—men like Her-

bert Simon, of Carnegie-Mellon University, and Albert Hirschman, of the Institute for Advanced Study, who challenge the psychological assumptions of the orthodox model. However, you will find very few under age fifty in tenured chairs at major universities, or in the prestigious economics journals; and you will not find work of this kind in the body of theory taught to aspiring young economists.



THE DEDUCTIVE METHOD OF PRACTICING ECONOMIC science creates a professional ethic of studied myopia. Apprentice economists are relieved of the need to learn much about the complexities of human motivation, the messy universe of economic institutions, or the real dynamics of technological change. In economics, deduction drives out empiricism. Those who have real empirical curiosity and insight about the workings of banks, corporations, production technologies, trade unions, economic history, or individual behavior are dismissed as casual empiricists, literary historians, or sociologists, and marginalized within the profession. In their place departments of economics are graduating a generation of *idiots savants*, brilliant at esoteric mathematics yet innocent of actual economic life.

In a spoof titled "Life Among the Econ," published in 1973 in the *Western Economic Journal*, the Swedish-born economist Axel Leijonhufvud proposed that the methods of the economics profession might be best understood anthropologically, as the rituals of a primitive tribe.

Among the Econ . . . status is tied to the manufacture of certain types of implements, called "modls". . . most of these "modls" seem to be of little or no practical use, [which] probably accounts for the backwardness and abject cultural poverty of the tribe. . . The priestly caste (the Math-Econ) [ranks higher] than either Micro or Macro. . . The rise of the Math-Econ seems to be associated with the previously noted trend among all the Econ towards more ornate, ceremonial modls.

The habits of the Math-Econ are perplexing to the laity, not only because the math itself is technical but also because economists use statistics and mathematical models in several distinct ways, each with its own pitfalls. Some mathematical models are pure theory; they use algebra only to manipulate assumptions. This is true of general-equilibrium theory, and also true of many lesser topics ex-

plored in journal articles. For example, a characteristic article titled "A Model of Housing Tenure Choice," by J. V. Henderson and Y. M. Ioannides, which appeared in a recent issue of *The American Economic Review*, inquired how wealth, income, "life cycle," and other variables influence the decision whether to buy or rent a house. For the sake of analysis the model assumed, among other things, that housing markets are "in equilibrium." The model went on to deduce algebraically what consumers do (in theory) given different market circumstances. The authors then reported certain conclusions, such as "Renting becomes more attractive if housing is subject to random capital gains or losses and consumers may also invest in a capital market at a fixed rate of return." In other words, consumers will prefer a sure thing to a gamble. What's striking about the article, and others of its genre, is that it contains no data and no indication that the authors have ever studied an actual housing market. The article is pure manipulation of assumption and inference, using mathematical logic.

A quite different use of mathematics is econometric modeling, which can be heavily empirical. Commercial consulting firms such as Wharton Econometrics, Chase Econometrics, and Data Resources, Inc., (DRI) have devised complex models of the economy, which may use upwards of a thousand equations, linked by means of a computer program. By collecting data over a long period of time, and tabulating correlations, an econometric modeler attempts to predict how variables will influence one another in the future—assuming of course that the patterns of the recent past persist. For example, if the federal deficit is \$200 billion and monetary policy is tightened, unemployment (according to past correlations) might rise to eight percent and interest rates might be 12 to 13 percent. Different models use different assumptions of causality. A supply-side model might make savings rates paramount; a monetarist model, money supply; a Keynesian model, the size of the public deficit.

The difficulties with such models are that there are always more variables than the model considers and that the past doesn't necessarily foreshadow the future. In recent years the major influences on macroeconomic climate have been external variables (the OPEC price increase, for example) and structural changes in the system (the globalization of technology and finance). Further, an econometric model cannot read the mind of the Federal Reserve Board or Congress. The latest DRI forecast predicted fairly stable economic growth through the late 1980s, but the forecast could be derailed by financial panic, political deadlock over deficit reduction, the course of the Iran-Iraq war, or unexpected structural influences stemming from banking deregulation. After a period of rapidly increasing popularity in the 1970s the big economic forecasting models have fallen somewhat from favor. "We subscribe to DRI," says the president of Cyclops Steel, William Knoell, who is also the chairman of the board of the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank. "We consider them as one more input, as a baseline against which you have to apply common sense.

But if you look at their forecasts in steel over the past few years, they weren't all that good. Economists generally missed the enormous rise of the dollar. They missed the recent drop in interest rates. There are just too many imponderables."

A number of fledgling econometric firms went out of business in the early 1980s. DRI—which has hundreds of commercial clients and total billings in excess of \$80 million a year—and the other big firms are moving away from the mega-models, into more customized models that project a client's sales using a variety of macroeconomic scenarios. The crystal ball has given way to the more modest tool of contingency planning.

A DIFFERENT AND EVEN MORE CONTROVERSIAL USE OF econometric techniques is in the testing of algebraically modeled hypotheses. A mathematical technique known as multiple linear regression allows the testing of several variables that might have a cause-and-effect relationship, by considering them one at a time. If wages are thought to be influenced by occupation, education, IQ, sex, and race, econometric techniques can determine how strongly each factor correlates with variations in wages; the researcher can then attempt to impute causality.

This brand of econometric testing, however, brings manifold problems. In economic life cause-and-effect does not happen instantly; there are delays before influences are felt. The last refuge of an economic scoundrel is the time lag. By manipulating time lags the determined econometrician can "prove" almost anything. Moreover, though many economists argue that the fair way to test a theory is to specify the hypothesis, and run the regression equations once, it is common practice to keep fiddling with the equations, manipulating lag times, lead times, and other variables, until the equations more or less confirm the hypothesis. Some correlations, of course, may be just coincidence; other apparent correlations may disguise real causes that have been overlooked.

The computer has made it simple for researchers to run an almost infinite number of equations, using standard software packages. Rather than serving as a tool of empirical scrutiny, this technique can turn the economist into a pure technician—or a pure ideologue. Recent innovations, such as "vector auto regressions" and "multivariate auto-regressive integrative moving average" models, in effect have the computer go on automatic pilot and search for correlations, almost at random. "The risk of cheap computing," says Roger Brinner, the chief domestic economist at DRI, "is the assumption that the machine can provide the intelligence. Researchers make the error of failing to test competing theories against each other; instead you spend all of your time plugging away at the terminal, trying to get your data to fit your theory."

One celebrated methodological and ideological controversy raged over work by Martin Feldstein, a professor of economics at Harvard and a former chairman of President

Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, on the influence that Social Security has on savings rates. In a series of journal articles Feldstein reported econometric findings that Social Security had depressed savings, by about 50 percent, which would have depressed GNP, by many hundreds of billions of dollars. But at the 1980 meeting of the AEA two relatively unknown researchers, Dean Leimer and Selig Lesnoy, of the Social Security Administration research staff, presented a paper showing a serious technical error in Feldstein's equations. When the error was corrected, the model Feldstein had used showed absurd results. *Without* Social Security, savings would have been negative. Feldstein ultimately revised his own equations to reconcile them with his hypothesis. But the affair was considered damaging to Feldstein's prestige and a good object lesson in the hubris of econometrics.

AMONG THE MOST ASTRINGENT CRITICS OF THE overmathematization of economics is one of the profession's most notable mathematicians, Wassily Leontief. In his 1970 AEA presidential address, Leontief, the first economist to work with computers and the inventor of mathematical input-output analysis, which won him the 1973 Nobel Prize, decried the increasing "preoccupation with imaginary, hypothetical, rather than with observable, reality," and described a "Darwinian" process by which pure theorists drive out those who study the actual economy. By 1982 Leontief had so despaired of his profession that he had ceased publishing in economics journals. In a letter to *Science* magazine Leontief wrote, "Page after page of professional economic journals are filled with mathematical formulas leading the reader from sets of more or less plausible but entirely arbitrary assumptions to precisely stated but irrelevant theoretical conclusions."

A good empiricist, Leontief tabulated recent articles in *The American Economic Review*. In the period from March, 1977, to December, 1981, Leontief found, 54 percent of AER articles were "mathematical models without any data." Another 22 percent drew statistical inferences from data generated for some other purpose. Another 12 percent used analysis with no data. Half of one percent of the articles used direct empirical analysis of data generated by the author. Leontief says that a more recent tabulation finds the trend unabated. "We found exactly one piece of empirical research, and it was about the utility maximization of pigeons."

Another critic of the mathematical approach was the late Oskar Morgenstern, the co-inventor of games theory and an economist and mathematician loosely identified with the conservative Austrian school. Morgenstern, in a splendid nontechnical book titled *On the Accuracy of Economic Observations*, pointed out the unreliability of most economic statistics. For one thing, people responding to official questionnaires often lie, out of fear of government scrutiny or a desire to mislead the competition. "Nothing like this occurs in nature," Morgenstern said. For another,

economics is notorious for using second-hand data, collected for other purposes, whose logic may be legal or bureaucratic rather than economic. Profits reported on balance sheets for tax purposes have little to do with real profits. Many official statistical series are completely incompatible with one another. In international-trade statistics one nation's import figures invariably fail to conform to the trading partner's export figures.

Morgenstern went on to explain how the mathematical manipulations of data that are imperfect to begin with compound statistical errors, leading to wildly inaccurate results. If a regression equation shows the absence of a correlation, it may be because no real relationship exists or because the statistics are incorrect, and the economist has no way of telling which is the case. The more complex the equation, the greater the possibility of cascading errors. Moreover, if the economist is consciously or unconsciously tailoring the equation to what turns out to be false data, the equation can produce truly absurd results when correct data are substituted. That tendency doesn't mean that researchers are dishonest; it means that the whole method is suspect. Lester Thurow has written, "If Newton and his contemporaries had behaved as the economics profession is now behaving and had access to the modern computer, it is likely that the law of gravity would never have been discovered."

The mathematical language and the deductive method tend to give economists a certitude that theirs—and theirs alone—is a "hard" social science. At the December, 1983, annual gathering of the AEA, George Stigler, a Nobel laureate and a leader of the Chicago school, began a lecture by remarking that a colleague in political science had inquired why there were no Nobel Prizes awarded in the other social sciences. "I told him," Stigler said, "that they already had a Nobel Prize in literature." In the same vein another economist says archly, "Political scientists think the plural of anecdote is data."

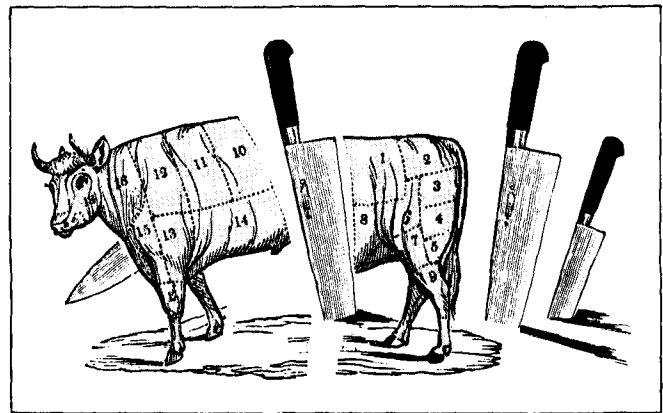
The most frequently cited defense of mathematical, deductive reasoning was offered more than thirty years ago in Milton Friedman's *Essays in Positive Economics*. It does not matter, Friedman argued, whether an assumption is empirically true so long as it is internally consistent and the model is not refuted by data. Thus, even in a world where competition is far from perfect it is valid to model economic activity "as if" it conformed to the axioms of classical economics. Friedman used an analogy of a hypothetical expert billiards player.

It seems not at all unreasonable . . . that the billiard player made his shots *as if* he knew the complicated mathematical formulas that would give the optimum directions of travel, could estimate accurately by eye the angles . . . could make lightning calculations from the formulas, and could then make the balls travel in the direction indicated by the formulas. Our confidence in this hypothesis is not based on the belief that billiard players, even expert ones, can or do go through the process described; it derives rather from the belief that, unless in

some way or other they were capable of reaching essentially the same result, they would not in fact be *expert* billiard players.

It is only a short step from these examples to the economic hypothesis that under a wide range of circumstances individual firms behave *as if* they were seeking rationally to maximize their expected returns . . . and had full knowledge of the data needed to succeed in this attempt; *as if*, that is, they knew the relevant cost and demand functions.

Pursuing Friedman's metaphor, Professor Richard Thaler, of Cornell University, suggests that a better analogy is to a novice billiards player, who has perhaps had a few beers. "The novice will use little or no 'english,' will pay little attention to where the cue ball goes after the shot, and may be subject to some optical illusions that cause him to systematically mis-hit some other shots." No formula can accurately predict the amateur's shots, and the real economy contains far more novices than experts.



IT MATTERS THAT ECONOMISTS ARE TRAINED TO VIEW the world the way they do. Lately, almost all public-policy questions have been defined as economic ones. The experts with the professional authority to pronounce on such questions are, of course, economists. Civic issues of public values, political power, the nature of democratic society, are mistaken for narrowly technical issues, with conclusions ordained and alternative solutions foreclosed.

An equally serious consequence of the professional obsession with model making is that the most pressing *economic* questions lie outside the frame of reference. The issues that standard economics can't explain and doesn't address are of far greater moment than the ones "solved" by the formal proofs. A non-economist reading the economics journals is struck mainly by what is left out. The literature of standard economics recalls Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Minor subjects have usurped center stage, while the truly important ones remain tantalizingly out of view.

One could imagine a wholly different sort of economics, which empirically investigated when the assumptions of the standard model apply and when they don't. How do technological and institutional changes influence econom-

ic growth? What institutional circumstances merit public intervention? What are the links between economic performance and cultural and political values? When is the famous trade-off between equality and efficiency a genuine imperative, and when is it only a rationalization for privilege? Which markets behave like the textbook market? Under what cultural, technological, and institutional circumstances does interference with the market allocation of capital investment produce dynamic gains? What really accounts for the wide disparities in the degree of technological success achieved by different nations in different historical eras? What practical costs and what benefits to dynamic efficiency do different forms of redistribution incur? What really motivates human behavior, and under what circumstances are impulses cooperative and altruistic as well as self-interested?

Adam Smith wrote, in a famous passage celebrating economic egoism, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." But are there any circumstances under which cooperation is more "efficient" than the pursuit of self-interest? If so, what are they? Why are some labor unions in some nations friendly to productivity and technological progress and wage restraint, while others are obstructionist and self-seeking? Which sorts of deregulation lose in stability what they gain in innovation? Maybe it is appropriate to deregulate airline routes but not aircraft safety. Maybe trusting market discipline to deal with bank failures produces a loss to institutional stability that outweighs the gain to allocational efficiency. These subjects are seldom treated in the economics journals, except at impenetrable levels of abstraction and assumption.

To the extent that observation challenges theory, real empiricism becomes a thorn in the side of the deductive method. Richard Freeman and James Medoff, economists at Harvard, have assembled data indicating that the actual influence of trade unions on productivity depends on institutional particulars. Some unions, by providing workers a voice and a fair grievance procedure, apparently improve output. Others depress it. Getting down to cases suggests that orthodox theory has ignored the crucial variables of worker motivation and labor-management interaction. The most common dismissal of work like Freeman and Medoff's is "That's very interesting—but it isn't economics."

The puzzle of persistent episodic unemployment opens another revealing window on the way orthodoxy deals with evidence that does not fit the standard paradigm. The market for labor is the largest and most important market in the economy: about three quarters of all costs are ultimately wage costs. But this market chronically fails to clear—that is, it fails to equilibrate changes in supply and demand with marginal adjustments in price. Some workers remain arguably overpaid, while others have no jobs. In theory, if the market paid workers exactly their "worth," there would be enough work to go around, and no unemployment. But that doesn't happen. And it doesn't help to

attribute unemployment to the distortions introduced by governments and unions, because business cycles were around long before trade unions or big-spending governments were.

If labor markets don't clear, something is fundamentally wrong with the classical paradigm of perfect competition. Keynes devised a plausible explanation for boom and bust—the tendency of aggregate demand to fluctuate—but he never produced one for what economists like to call the "stickiness" of wages: that is, their tendency not to fall with rising unemployment.

During the past decade an anti-Keynesian school, the rational-expectations school, has proposed a radically classical explanation of the sticky-wage puzzle: involuntary unemployment is an illusion. Rational-expectations economists, such as Robert E. Lucas, Jr., of the University of Chicago, and Thomas Sargent, of the University of Minnesota, argue that economic man acts rationally but sometimes suffers misperceptions. Thus, unemployment is caused by the misperception that if you quit your job you will find a better one elsewhere, or by the refusal of workers conditioned to accepting high wages to take more realistic ones. A related theory is that unemployment is nothing more than the search for better jobs. This analysis isn't implausible—high-wage workers often do refuse to take available low-wage jobs—but it doesn't fully explain the failure of wages to adjust or the cyclical variations in unemployment.

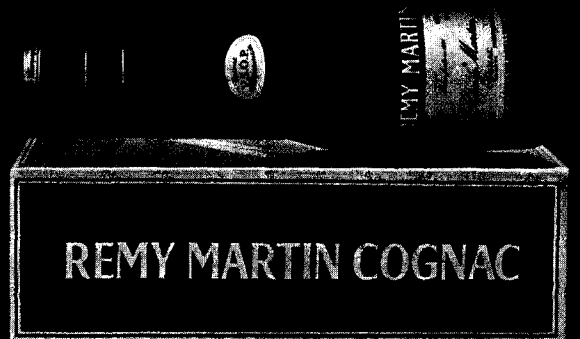
To borrow an observation of Lester Thurow's, the Great Depression was not just a decade of worker misperceptions about job opportunities. Few workers refused to take lower-wage jobs; many of the unemployed were desperate for any job. And the full-employment experience of the Second World War was the result not of sudden clarity in perceptions but of large-scale government spending. Real wages *rose* sharply during the war, and so did employment. The basic Keynesian view may not explain sticky wages, but it convincingly explains periodic unemployment.

Another recent line of analysis has begun to get at why labor markets fail to clear. Interestingly, this approach is more sociological than economic. A number of labor economists have observed that it is rational for a firm to pay its employees more than a market-clearing wage, for reasons of stability and motivation. A slight wage premium engenders loyalty and effort; it produces a more stable, more productive work force; it decreases turnover and reduces training costs. Other violations of the axiom of pay based on marginal productivity, such as seniority, make for a more secure and hence more cooperative work force. Digital Equipment Corporation and some other firms have a practice of never laying off workers; this incurs short-run costs, but these are compensated for by high morale.

Moreover, if employers paid their workers a narrowly market-clearing wage, wages would have to rise and fall almost daily. Unemployed people would regularly show up at factory gates to underbid the wages of the employed. No journeyman worker would ever train an apprentice,



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lest the apprentice underbid him for a job. In theory older workers are paid more than younger ones because they are more productive. But in practice productivity peaks early in midlife; older workers are often slower and less adept. They are paid better for the sake of the workplace as a social system and our conventions of fairness, not because they have higher marginal productivity. In short, it is not *homo economicus* who finds it efficient to pay salaries above a market-clearing wage but *homo sociologus*.

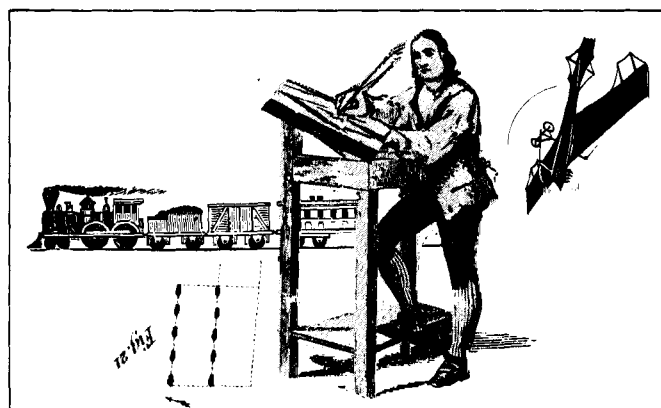
The standard economic literature also produces little useful insight into the sources of technological innovation and dynamic gain, because that is not how the problems are posed. According to the prevailing definition, economics is the study of the allocation of scarce resources: how free markets steer resources to their optimal use. But, to take a historical example, economic resources in the United States on the eve of the Second World War were lying fallow, because unemployment was high, purchasing power was depressed, and firms—already experiencing a lack of customers and substantial excess capacity—were (rationally) failing to invest capital. Along came the war, causing the government to raise taxes, to increase public borrowing, and abruptly to invest about a third of the gross national product in war production. The result was a drop in unemployment from 15 percent to two percent, a growth rate that averaged 11 percent a year throughout the war, the development of new advanced technologies (many with postwar civilian applications), and the training of a generation of skilled industrial workers. By 1944 the war had so revived the slack economy that civilian disposable income exceeded 1940 levels, notwithstanding the vast outlays of money devoted to military purposes. Surely there is in this experience a pattern of dynamic gain worth investigation.

Seemingly, the Second World War would be a laboratory case of the effects of deflecting a market economy from its true path with substantial planning and government control of investment, to say nothing of wage and price controls. Yet professional economists have not paid much attention to the war years. On the contrary, in practice econometric modeling often discounts the war experience because it tends to curdle the equations.

Orthodox economics has little appreciation for dynamic growth of the entrepreneurial, Schumpeterian variety, either. One finds extensive abstract debate in the scholarly literature about production functions, capital reswitching, labor productivity, and capital-output ratios but precious little concrete information about the rapid development of aircraft technology after the Second World War or the engineering advances and marketing strategies with which the Japanese machine-tool industry overtook its American counterpart.

In this last case economics knows only that Japanese economic planning didn't help, because it couldn't have, *a priori*. Professor Paul Krugman, of MIT, formerly the specialist on international trade for the Reagan Council of Economic Advisers, disposes of Japanese planning by the

usual deductive method: "By the early 1960s the Japanese steel industry would have had a competitive advantage over the U.S. industry even if the Japanese government had kept hands off. The same technological 'book of blueprints' was available to both countries, access to raw materials was no longer a crucial factor, and labor costs were much higher in the U.S. Capital was becoming steadily more available in Japan, thanks to a high savings rate. Quite independent of industrial targeting, Japan was gaining a comparative advantage in steel, while the U.S. was losing one." But did Japanese planning, *empirically*, make any difference? It must have made some difference. Does the Japanese government's coordinating role in the social system enhance Japan's dynamic efficiency and growth? Does Japan perhaps have a comparative advantage in, of all things, planning? That question is inadmissible.



AS THOMAS KUHN OBSERVED IN HIS WORK *THE STRUCTURE OF Scientific Revolutions*, scholarly conflict is always most intense along the boundaries of an established scientific paradigm challenged by anomalous observations. The "overthrow" of a scientific paradigm, Kuhn said, is much like a political revolution, which aims "to change political institutions in ways that those institutions themselves prohibit." The mistrust of empiricism in economics is a sure sign of an insecure regime.

Lately, a mood of self-doubt has even crept into the economics journals. In a wonderfully rich recent article in the *Journal of Economic Literature*, titled "The Rhetoric of Economics," Donald McCloskey, of the University of Iowa, wrote that economics is adrift in metaphors that have no application to empirical reality but that are taken literally, because they happen to be in the language of mathematics.

To say that markets can be represented by supply and demand "curves" is no less a metaphor than to say that the west wind is "the breath of autumn's being." . . . Each step in economic reasoning, even the reasoning of the official rhetoric, is metaphor. The world is said to be "like" a complex model, and its measurements are said to be like the easily measured proxy variable to hand.

Quoting the literary critic I. A. Richards, McCloskey defined a metaphor as "a transaction between contexts."

Modern economics is in many respects metaphor run wild: it not only stylizes and misstates what occurs in narrowly economic realms but also extends its theory of the rational, utility-maximizing *homo economicus* to areas of life in which values other than material maximization plainly apply, and about which it has no data. An example is economic theories of the family which consider children to be material goods. McCloskey added:

Metaphors, further, evoke attitudes that are better kept in the open and under the control of reasoning. . . . the invisible hand is so very discrete, so soothing, that we might be inclined to accept its touch without protest. . . . The metaphors of economics convey the authority of Science, and often convey, too, its claims to ethical neutrality. . . . "Marginal Productivity" is a fine, round phrase, a precise mathematical metaphor that encapsulates a most powerful piece of social description. Yet it brings with it an air of having solved the moral problem of distribution facing a society in which people cooperate to produce things together instead of producing things alone.

The study of who gets what and why, unlike the study of plants or planets, cannot help being an ideologically charged undertaking. Despite the laborious techniques and scientific pretensions, most brands of economics are covertly ideological. Marxian economics, with its labor theory of value, assumes the inevitability of class conflict, and hence the necessity of class struggle. Keynesianism, with its conviction that industrial capitalism is systemically unstable, offers an equally "scientific" rationale for government intervention. Neoclassical economics, with its reliance on the efficiency of markets, is a lavishly embroidered brief for laissez-faire.

There is certainly congruence between the current political swing back toward laissez-faire policies and the intellectual swing toward an idealized free market purged of institutional complications. But the model-building in economics is more than an apologia for the market, and the criticism of it is not limited to liberals.

Professor Israel Kirzner, a neo-Austrian, writes, in an observation that might have come from a neo-Keynesian, that the equilibrium model of competition is "obviously. . . unrealistic, and unhelpful in understanding markets. . . ." but "instead of dismantling the elaborate equilibrium models of which neoclassical economics consists—and appreciating the subtle processes of spontaneous learning made possible by market interaction under imperfect knowledge, the new work seeks to address the problems by constructing even more complicated equilibrium models."

Professor Joseph L. Bower, a practitioner of the famous case method of the Harvard Business School, has called the neoclassical model "wildly unrealistic," writing that the standard economic "theory of the firm, so called, is in fact elegantly developed surmise. The literature of the field has something of the character of a chain letter. The journal articles relate well enough to each other; it is only the reality that is difficult."

TODAY THERE ARE TWO QUITE OPPOSITE TRENDS IN economics. One is centrifugal; there is a flowering of epistemological doubt. There are anguished essays like McCloskey's in the *Journal of Economic Literature* (which, though published by the AEA, has served as a tolerant outlet for heretics) and even an occasional one in *The American Economic Review* itself. And there are those presidential addresses at AEA conventions. At the same time, there is a strong centripetal impulse. Economics *as practiced* is unchanged, and the resistance to real diversity within faculty ranks and classroom curricula is fiercer than ever. The debates are for the college of cardinals, not for the parish flock.

A generation ago economics was far more committed to observation, disputation, and its own intellectual history. The lions of the mid-century had lived through depression and war, had watched real economic institutions totter, had worked in economic agencies, and had appreciated the power of wartime statecraft. Most of them are now gone. In the 1920s and 1930s an eclectic school of economics known as institutionalism flourished. Inspired by Veblen, institutionalists were committed to the empirical study of corporations, banks, labor unions, and so on as concrete social organizations. Ironically, they were displaced partly by econometricians, who promised a more rigorous empiricism. Institutionalists still exist; they have their own professional guild, the Association for Evolutionary Economics (after a word favored by Veblen, who argued that economic institutions evolve). They still have strongholds in economics departments at state universities in the South and the Midwest. But few institutionalists are to be found at the fifteen or twenty elite graduate schools that turn out tenured faculty for one another. The very term has become a pejorative.

The other two main schools that today compete with neoclassicism—neo-Marxism and post-Keynesianism—are intellectually lively but effectively isolated from mainstream economics. The neo-Marxists have their own professional association, the Union for Radical Political Economics, and have strongholds in a few graduate departments, but they hold, by my count, only four or five tenured positions at the elite universities, have only token access to the major journals, and receive little research funding. Ten years ago the Harvard economics department created a furor when it refused to grant tenure to the leading young neo-Marxist Samuel Bowles, even though the appointment had the support of such senior luminaries as John Kenneth Galbraith, Leontief, and Kenneth Arrow. Bowles decamped to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he and colleagues have built one of three major graduate departments offering neo-Marxist curricula. Another of the three, the University of California at Riverside, recently had its graduate program threatened with elimination, though the program is now expected to survive in truncated form. Harvard's sole tenured radical economist, Steven Marglin, was far more orthodox at the time he was granted tenure.

Neo-Marxists study what mainstream economics over-

looks: the organization of production, the influence of technology on work, the impact of the globalization of finance. A "social conflict" model of productivity slowdown by Samuel Bowles and colleagues was sufficiently plausible when rendered econometrically that it was accepted for publication in the *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*. However, Marxism is at once a mode of scholarly inquiry and a revolutionary ideology. In America any form of Marxism is hopelessly distant from the political mainstream. Moreover, although economists have the distinction, rare among scholars, of influencing policy, few American policy-makers will look for advice to economists who call themselves Marxist. Neo-Marxism is thus precluded from serving as a convincing alternative to the dominant neoclassical school.

The third dissenting school, the post-Keynesian, is the weakest and apparently the most despised of all. The post-Keynesians want to rescue Keynes from the neoclassical synthesis—which Keynes's disciple Joan Robinson has called "bastard Keynesianism." They, along with the institutionalists, insist that large corporations and labor unions are major facts of economic life and that economic intercourse cannot be modeled as mechanical transactions in equilibrium. But neoclassical economists are mostly contemptuous of the post-Keynesians. A few Marxists, apparently, can be tolerated. But those claiming to be the true heirs of Keynes are regarded as economic Anabaptists, a historically curious theological mistake that won't go away. Even at Rutgers University, which is tolerant of post-Keynesianism, the two tenured post-Keynesians are not permitted to teach the basic courses on economic theory; they are treated as oddities whom career-minded graduate students would do well to avoid.

At its 1982 convention the AEA sponsored a session on post-Keynesianism—and invited no post-Keynesian panelists. The National Science Foundation, which awards about \$9 million a year for economic research, has told post-Keynesian applicants that the economics division is interested primarily in mainstream research. The one well-entrenched center of dissenting research in the spirit of Keynes, the Cambridge Economic Policy Group, in England, has lost all of its British government funding.

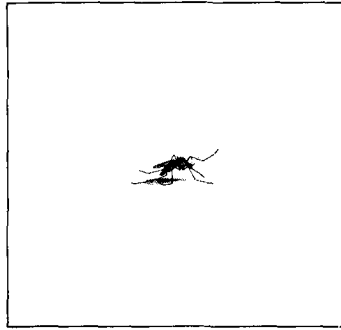
In the interstices between the schools are a handful of brilliant eclectics—an older generation, including Galbraith, Leontief, Albert Hirschman, and Herbert Simon, and a few people in their thirties and forties like Lester Thurow, James Medoff, Richard Freeman, George Akerlof, of Berkeley, and Michael Piore, of MIT. Piore's recent book, *The Second Industrial Divide*, which he wrote with the political economist Charles Sabel, painstakingly re-examines technological innovation throughout history and concludes that the present macroeconomic woes are due in part to unsettling changes in the organization of corporations, financial systems, technologies, and consumer markets. This sort of insight depends on the concrete study of institutions.

The difficulty is that eclecticism, no matter how brilliant, doesn't add up to a contending school. The great idiosyncratic economists of the last generation, like Galbraith and Simon, disseminated their work to a broad audience but left few spores within the profession. In recent years the fields of inquiry that deal with applied economics have been driven from the standard curriculum. Thirty years ago an economics student took courses in money and banking, labor economics, economic history, and perhaps industrial organization, economic development, and international trade. All of these courses grounded the grand theory in a sense of how actual economic institutions operate. Today these are considered remnants of an older, not quite scientific tradition. A student looking for the fast track to a tenured position at a prestigious university tends to avoid them.

Most economists accord scholars who are trained in other disciplines but who investigate economic phenomena all the respect that M.D.s show for chiropractors. At a Federal Reserve Board conference last year on the merits of industrial policy, the work of Robert Reich, the author of *The Next American Frontier*, came up. Reich teaches public policy and was trained as a lawyer. One prominent economist, late of the Council of Economic Advisers senior staff, dismissed Reich thus: "He doesn't even believe in general equilibrium!"

The economic historian Robert Heilbroner titled his book on the history of economic thought *The Worldly Philosophers*. As a description of the moral philosophers of the Enlightenment who abandoned metaphysics for the investigation of commercial life, the phrase fit perfectly. As a description of today's economists, however, Heilbroner's title would be a misnomer. Economists have become the least worldly of social scientists. At a time when the other social sciences—sociology, psychology, political science, history—are letting many flowers bloom and many schools contend, only economics has such fear of dissension. "There is a profound weakness at the core of neoclassical economics," Heilbroner says. "It can't answer the most basic questions. What is a price? What is money? What killed full employment? What is the boundary between economics and politics, or society? It has become like medieval theology. Before economics can progress, it must abandon its suicidal formalism."

Yet mainstream economics is doing nothing of the kind. Virtually all of the heretics I have talked to agree that if they were young assistant professors attempting to practice their brand of economics today, they would not get tenure. The most frequently repeated insight of Thomas Kuhn's is that a paradigm cannot be displaced by evidence, only by another paradigm. And no dissenting paradigm seems able to gain a foothold within economics. Thus the economic orthodoxy is reinforced by ideology, by the sociology of the profession, by the politics of who gets published or promoted and whose research gets funded. In the economics profession the free marketplace of ideas is one more market that doesn't work like the model. □



THE MOSQUITO

I see the mosquito kneeling on the soft underside of my arm,
 kneeling
 Like a fruitpicker, kneeling like an old woman
 With the proboscis of her prayer buried in the idea of God,
 And I know we shall not speak with the aliens
 And that peace will not happen in my life,
 not unless
 It is in the burnt oil spreading across the surfaces of ponds,
 in the dark
 Egg-rafts clotting and the wiggletails expiring like batteries.
 Bring a little alcohol and a little balm
 For these poppies planted by the Queen of Neptune.
 In her photographs, she is bearded and spurred, embellished
 five hundred times,
 Her modular legs crouching, her insufferable head unlocking
 To lower the razor-edge of its tubes, and she is there
 in the afternoon
 When the wind gives up the spirit of cleanliness
 And there rises from the sound the brackish oyster and squid smell
 of creation.
 Nights with her, I am loved for myself, for the succulent
 Flange of my upper lip, the twin bellies of my eyelids.
 She adores the easy, the soft. She picks the tenderest blossoms
 of insomnia.
 Mornings while the jackhammer rips the pavement outside my window,
 While the sanitation workers bang the cans against the big truck
 and shout to each other over the motor,
 I watch her strut like an udder with my blood,
 Imagining the luminous pick descending into Trotsky's skull
 and the eleven days
 I waited for the cold chill, nightmare, and nightsweat of malaria,
 Imagining the mating call in the vibrations of her wings,
 And imagining, in the simple knot of her ganglia,
 How she thrills to my life, how she sings for the harvest.

—Rodney Jones

Bring back the bedtime story.



Do you remember a parent or grandparent reading to you when you were a child?

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That's the philosophy and strategy of RIF. RIF stands for Reading Is Fundamental, a national, non-profit program with thousands of local community projects that get books to children and children into books. So, if you have youngsters, put the RIF philosophy to work in your home. Bring back the bedtime story tonight. Then help make it work in your neighborhood. Get in touch with your local RIF project soon.



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Washington, D.C. 20024

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MUSIC

OLD SOUNDS MADE NEW

BY LLOYD SCHWARTZ

SCENE: THE CHECKOUT line in New York's most extensive (and trendiest) classical-record outlet. A young couple are debating whether to buy a particular recording of the Sibelius First Symphony. An inquisitive music critic in line behind them can't resist the impulse to put in a good word for the performance—the very first recording of the symphony, made in 1930 with the composer's blessing, and still the most moving. Upon discovering the age of the recording, however, the couple instantly decide against it. They didn't acquire their state-of-the-art stereo system to hear scratchy surfaces and dead, monophonic sound.

I was depressed. Not merely because I loved the rejected recording and wanted these people to appreciate a great performance. And not merely because this incident underlined how rarely advances in technology have anything to do with artistic values. But also because the couple were right. Why should anyone have to put up with poor sound, especially since this long-playing transfer probably wouldn't do anything near full justice to the vitality, the warmth, the spaciousness, the *naturalness* of the sound of the original 78 rpm discs? I

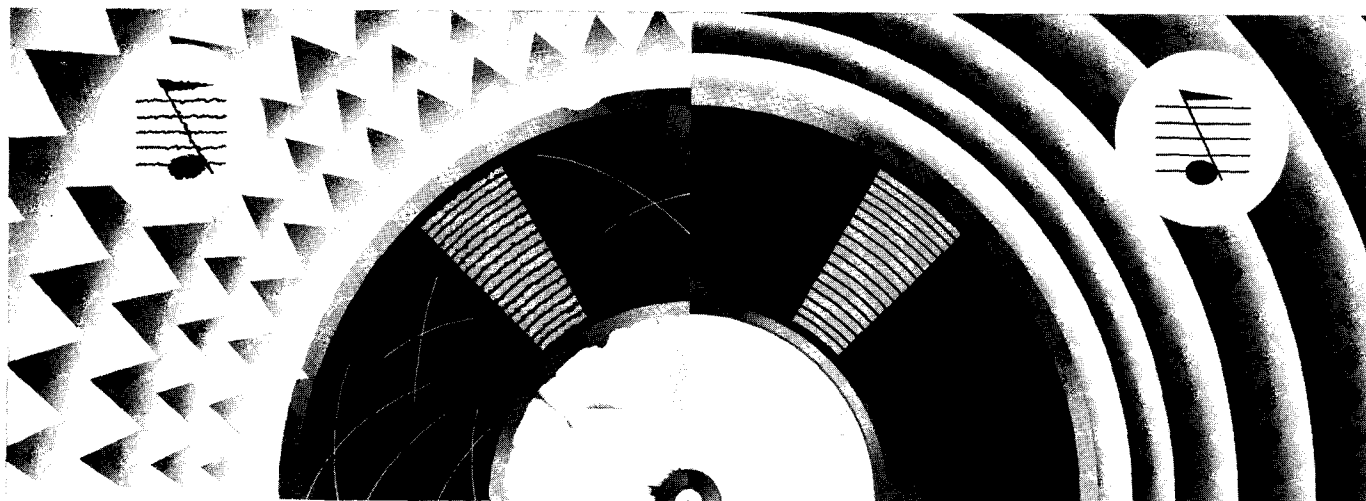
Lloyd Schwartz is the classical-music editor of The Boston Phoenix and the author of These People, a collection of poems.

knew that those old records were technologically far ahead of the primitive equipment once used to play them, and that the remarkably wide frequency range I can hear when I play even my most ancient records on good modern equipment was going to be diminished, cramped, squashed, in the record manufacturer's misguided attempt to reduce the noise of the original shellac surfaces. My own comparisons have taught me that some of my favorite "historical" records on my old windup Victrola with a steel needle and a cartridge that weighs nearly a pound actually sound more lifelike than any LP transfers of them heard on the best modern machines. No wonder the younger generation has such contempt for the musical past. As the great performers of the first half of this century become less and less known, as the demand for their recordings dwindles, so the standards of comparison become lost and are forgotten.

Fortunately, there are signs for hope. The big record companies seem to have stopped "enhancing" historical records with the tin-can-telephone sound of artificial stereo. Seraphim (EMI) has recently reissued the classic 1930s Glyndebourne and Berlin performances of Mozart operas, remastered by Keith Hardwick in clearer sound than they've ever had before on LP. If one still can't count on the big companies to produce

consistently good transfers, at least there are several smaller American companies that seem motivated by the desire to give older performances a fighting chance. Such labels as Past Masters (which recently stopped distributing its records to stores; a catalogue can be obtained by writing to P.O. Box 713, West Paterson, N.J. 07424) and Discocorp, a company that specializes in recordings of live performances (inevitably, the sound is less reliable; P.O. Box 771, Berkeley, Calif. 94701, if you can't find them in your local store), provide well-engineered, unadulterated transfers from the 78s or the original masters. Past Masters has helped restore to memory such exciting but relatively obscure conductors as Albert Coates (the great Russian-born music director of the London Symphony Orchestra) and Oskar Fried (a German Jew, friend and disciple of Mahler, who went east to Russia instead of west to Los Angeles to escape the Nazis). Our understanding of more familiar artists, such as Toscanini, Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Casals, Joseph Szigeti, and Artur Schnabel, would be seriously impaired without their repertoires on Discocorp, which recently released, for example, Toscanini's thrilling performances of Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony* and Schubert's and Schumann's second symphonies—keystone Romantic pieces that Toscanini never recorded commercially.

FOR PURE SOUND, the most astonishing new releases of old records come from In Sync Laboratories, Inc., on cassettes. Barton Wimble, a restoration engineer, and E. Alan Silver, the president of In Sync, have located superb pressings of some rare and memorable early electric recordings, made in the



late twenties and early thirties. The surface noise, actually caused less by wear than by abrasives that were added to the shellac to prevent wear, has been delicately filtered without altering the frequency range. Proper pitch has also been carefully restored (78 rpm is more a generic term than a technical fact, with real recording speeds having varied from around 72 to more than 80 revolutions per minute). Distortion on climaxes has been minimized by choosing—from among a dozen sizes and shapes—the best-fitting stylus for each record side. Wimble even uses a device that determines which side of a groove is the quieter.

These cassettes cost slightly more than most digital LPs (prices vary at the dealer's discretion; tapes may be ordered directly from In Sync, 2211 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10024), but considering their high quality and the labor involved in their production, the price is reasonable. Anyone who knows historical performances only from American LP transfers will be astounded at the vividness of the reproduction. To my ears, however, the original shellacs still have an uncanny depth of sound, an atmosphere around each instrument, which I miss on these tapes. The great "Bayreuth bell," for example, in the *Parsifal* first-act transformation scene conducted by Karl Muck, is powerfully alive on In Sync's cassette, but on the original disc it makes my room shake. Even so, there's more alluring and believable instrumental color and honest orchestral balance on any of the In Sync cassettes than on the latest multi-miked, electronically manipulated digital records. The reduced noise level, and the superb continuity of the editing, as well, more than compensate for the elusively diminished atmosphere.

Of the sixteen releases currently available from In Sync, the most important are surely the three cassettes devoted to the Wagner recordings of Karl Muck, the most distinguished Wagnerian conductor of the first quarter of this century. Under his leadership the Boston Symphony became a world-class orchestra. But in 1918 a rumor began to circulate that Muck had refused to conduct "The Star-Spangled Banner" before his concerts. In fact Muck had never been consulted about what was a managerial decision. In the anti-German hysteria at the height of the war he was interned for six months, at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, under the Alien Enemy Act. Afterward

he went home to Germany and never returned to America.

Hearing these selections—all Muck's electrical recordings of purely orchestral music (five overtures and preludes, *Siegfried's Rhine Journey and Funeral Music*, and the *Siegfried Idyll*) plus choral selections from *Parsifal*—one encounters a sensibility of elegant subtlety and austerity, yet great passion, too. Nothing quirky here, though the exuberant gaiety of the *Meistersinger* overture and the extraordinary vigor of the contrasts in the *Flying Dutchman* overture might seem surprising after the large-scale tragic vision and tenderness of the *Tristan* prelude (didn't anyone tell Muck how neurotic these lovers were supposed to be?) or the moving, radiantly drawn-out architecture of devotion in the *Parsifal* scenes. The 1927 Bayreuth *Parsifal* cassette (like the original album of 78s) includes Wagner's son Siegfried conducting the magnificent Alexander Kipnis in the "Good Friday Music." The playing of both the Bayreuth Festival and Berlin State Opera orchestras is sublimely fluid and as expressively nuanced as speech.

Most of the conductors of this period were evidently less fanatical about precise orchestral attack and intonation than are most conductors today, who often seem to follow the letter rather than the singing spirit of Toscanini's obsession with clarity and precision. But Mengelberg's recordings of Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Fifth symphonies, Richard Strauss's of Beethoven's Fifth, Leo Blech's of Beethoven's and Brahms's violin concertos, with Fritz Kreisler (who was freer here, more expressive, but no less enchanting of tone than on his later, more famous recordings with Barbirolli), Oskar Fried's of Liszt's *Mazeppa* and Wagner's *Faust Overture*, and the swirl of Spanish pieces played with still unmatched sympathy by Enrique Fernández Arbós and the Madrid Symphony Orchestra indicate their own convincing sense of ensemble—through phrasing that conveys meaning, through rhythms consistently alive, through an understanding of the long perspectives of pace and structure. And every so often, as in Mengelberg's "Turkish March," from Beethoven's *Ruins of Athens* music, recorded in 1928, the spine-tingling technical precision makes one forget the date.

Not every performance is a masterpiece. Mengelberg's *Coriolan* overture is half-hearted and pale. A particularly rare

recording, Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* overture, by Alexander von Zemlinsky, Schoenberg's teacher and brother-in-law and a composer whose distinction has only recently been rediscovered, shows him to have been an ineffectual though harmless conductor. But nothing on these cassettes is without interest. One of In Sync's most fascinating tapes is a sampler featuring such diverse conductors as the ebullient Sir Hamilton Harty, the elegant Walther Straram, and the brilliant and incomprehensibly neglected Piero Coppola; there is also Furtwängler leading an unlikely *Barber of Seville* overture, Coates in a marvelous "Magic Fire Music," Blech, Mengelberg, Zemlinsky, and even the composer Pietro Mascagni conducting Verdi.

In Sync also has a double cassette of *La Bohème*, recorded at La Scala in 1927 (three years after the death of Puccini) under the vibrant direction of Carlo Sabajno. A cast of expert *verismo* singers, including the hilarious Salvatore Baccaloni, presents an ensemble performance of exhilarating conviction and innocence—in startlingly "modern" sound.

Barton Wimble now also has his own label, Conductart, with Dan Hladik, and has started to issue tapes: Ravel's deliciously sexy opera *L'Heure Espagnole*, in a stylish 1930 performance supervised by the composer; Brahms's Fourth Symphony and *Academic Festival* overture, conducted by Max Fiedler, probably the only Brahms pupil to record any Brahms; coloratura soprano Luisa Tetrazzini singing her entire Verdi repertoire; excerpts from a First World War *Ring*, with Johanna Gadske as Brünnhilde; and works conducted by Weingartner, Fried, and Mengelberg (these cassettes are available by mail only: Box 616, Ansonia Station, New York, N.Y. 10023).

In some ways all of these recordings, regardless of the merit or the pleasures of the individual performances, are of inestimable value. After all, every recording is historical. When a company like In Sync develops a technology that opens our ears to the past, it puts us into more immediate contact with the questions of how and why styles change, which is the history of art. The better we understand styles no longer our own, the better armed we are against the loss of the values beneath the styles—commitments to meaning and feeling and taste which technology seems also to endanger. □

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COMPUTERS

EXPERTS TO A POINT

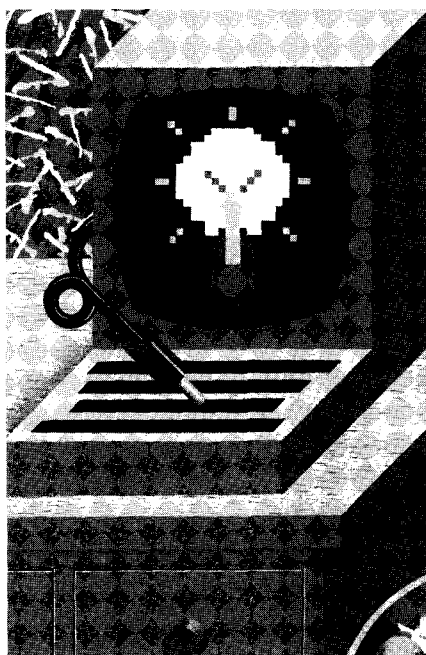
BY FRED HAPGOOD

“THE REASONING ANIMAL has finally made the reasoning machine,” Edward Feigenbaum, a professor of computer science at Stanford University, announced recently in *The Fifth Generation*, a popular book that he wrote with Pamela McCorduck, a science writer, discussing the development of “expert systems.” As often as we have heard such claims, which have been made time and again since the computer was invented, they still have the power to startle. We as a society have become relatively blasé about most of the things computers do or even might do. It no longer seems remarkable that they store information, search for it using key words, compose graphs, and do calculations. If someone announced that he had written a word-processing program that accepted voice dictation, or a shape-recognition program that was as good as a pigeon at identifying forms—both of which are very tough problems—only a few people would appreciate the genius required. Most of the rest of us would pass off the achievement with a shrug. Not so, however, if the program were able to reason, or think. That is a function with a difference.

Of course, to many people such claims are absurd—evidence perhaps of self-delusion, promotional hyperbole, or sloppy use of the language, but nothing more. The ability to reason, those who hold this view often argue, arises from some attribute (consciousness, autonomous intentions, self-awareness) that cannot by any cleverness be built into a machine. But others refuse to dismiss the possibility that someday computers will think, as we do. Since we have (perhaps unadvisedly) identified reason with our essence, logically such a development would mark the point at which machines began to be human. Surely it makes sense to monitor developments on an issue with so radical an implication.

Expert systems are a kind of computer program on which Feigenbaum, along

with many other software engineers, has been working since the 1960s, and which he has since begun to sell. On the most general level expert systems can be classified as programs that solve problems, as opposed to those, like word-processing programs, that provide a user with ways to manipulate data. The name derives from the kind of problems



that they are expected to deal with, those now the province of people thought of as “experts.” The user of an expert system fills in a form on the computer’s screen, whereupon some association to or deduction from the entered information is displayed. Whether or not expert systems can be said to reason, they are widely believed to be an important development in software engineering.

What were thought of as expert systems two years ago (the term is being used more loosely now) differed from conventional software in respects other than function: they were the result of a whole new approach to the construction of software. A computer program can be divided into three parts: numbers, which represent, though perhaps only

indirectly, the information entered into the program by its user or other programs; operations that transform one number into another (add 2, divide by 3, and so forth); and an internal network, the software equivalent of wiring, that shuttles the numbers from one operation to the next.

There has to be something in a program that identifies the right numbers and functions and brings them together. Ordinarily, the instructions for doing this are built into the design of the internal network. This structure is analogous to an assembly line, on which whatever is being assembled is always delivered to the worker responsible for the next step in the assembly and to no other. Such a program tends to be complicated, and very tricky to design. It is a great feat in programming to write something so complex and have it work the first time. Usually lots and lots of effort has to be devoted to finding and untangling those places where the control network has gotten tangled up in itself. Consequently, introducing modifications into a program written with conventional techniques is a slow, deliberate business.

In the sixties some computer scientists, particularly Allen Newell, of Carnegie-Mellon, began experimenting with an alternative architecture in which the responsibility for connecting the right numbers to the right operations was decentralized. In this new design the operations were provided with enough computing power of their own to pick out the numbers that were their business. The job of the network was reduced to cycling all the numbers past the operations, over and over. The analogy here would be to one of those circular conveyor belts that are used in airports to return baggage to passengers. A program like this demands a lot of processing power and therefore expensive hardware (every operation is a little computer), but it is simpler than a traditional network program. Other things being equal, such programs can be modified at less risk of spontaneously generating an infestation of bugs.

Almost as soon as the decentralized architecture had been thought of, a number of researchers in artificial intelligence, Feigenbaum among them, began using its new flexibility to develop the first expert systems. They would closet themselves with a professor in some other department—an analytical chemist, for instance—and ask him a series of questions about how he conclud-

Fred Hapgood, a science writer in Boston, writes frequently about computers.

ed whatever he did from the data he got from his laboratory tests. "How did you know this was salt?" they might ask. "The pH meter read seven," he might answer, "and that's about right for salt." "Is salt the only substance that gives that reading?" "Well, no, ethanol does—but of course that's a liquid." The programmers could then write a salt-identifying expert system: someone with a mysterious substance would state whether the substance was a solid or a liquid and whether its pH was seven, and the system would print out whatever verdict followed from these facts.

The programmers were more ambitious than this, and they tried to build programs that were adequate to a wide range of problems. It was at this point that the new architecture proved its worth. The interviews, which are the core of the process, are extremely delicate and intense. Experts may seem coldly rational to us, but to a computer the reasons they give for their decisions are illogical, ambiguous, and unpredictable. During these interviews the experts have to spell out on a whole new level of precision why they do what they do. From all accounts, the intellectual effort involved on both sides is enormous, and endless revision is required as rules laid down earlier turn out to be riddled with exceptions.

The new software design allowed the participants to concentrate on the interviewing and on the defining of the rules, instead of demanding that they interrupt themselves again and again to smooth out network bugs. Also, almost as important, the new system was easy to check up on, to watch at work: all the programmer had to do was ask for a list of the operations that had plucked out and worked on one of their numbers in a given cycle. This was easier than trying to trace a chain of interactions through long lists of instructions.

Over time a small number of programs were written that could perform as well as the experts in the relevant field on a narrow range of questions. One of these was a structural-chemistry program. A second, derived from interviews with a pulmonary specialist, associated symptoms with specific lung pathologies. (Diagnosis is one of the more common functions of expert systems.) A third simplified complicated mathematical expressions. There are others—though, so far, more are under development and in laboratories than have proved their worth in the field.

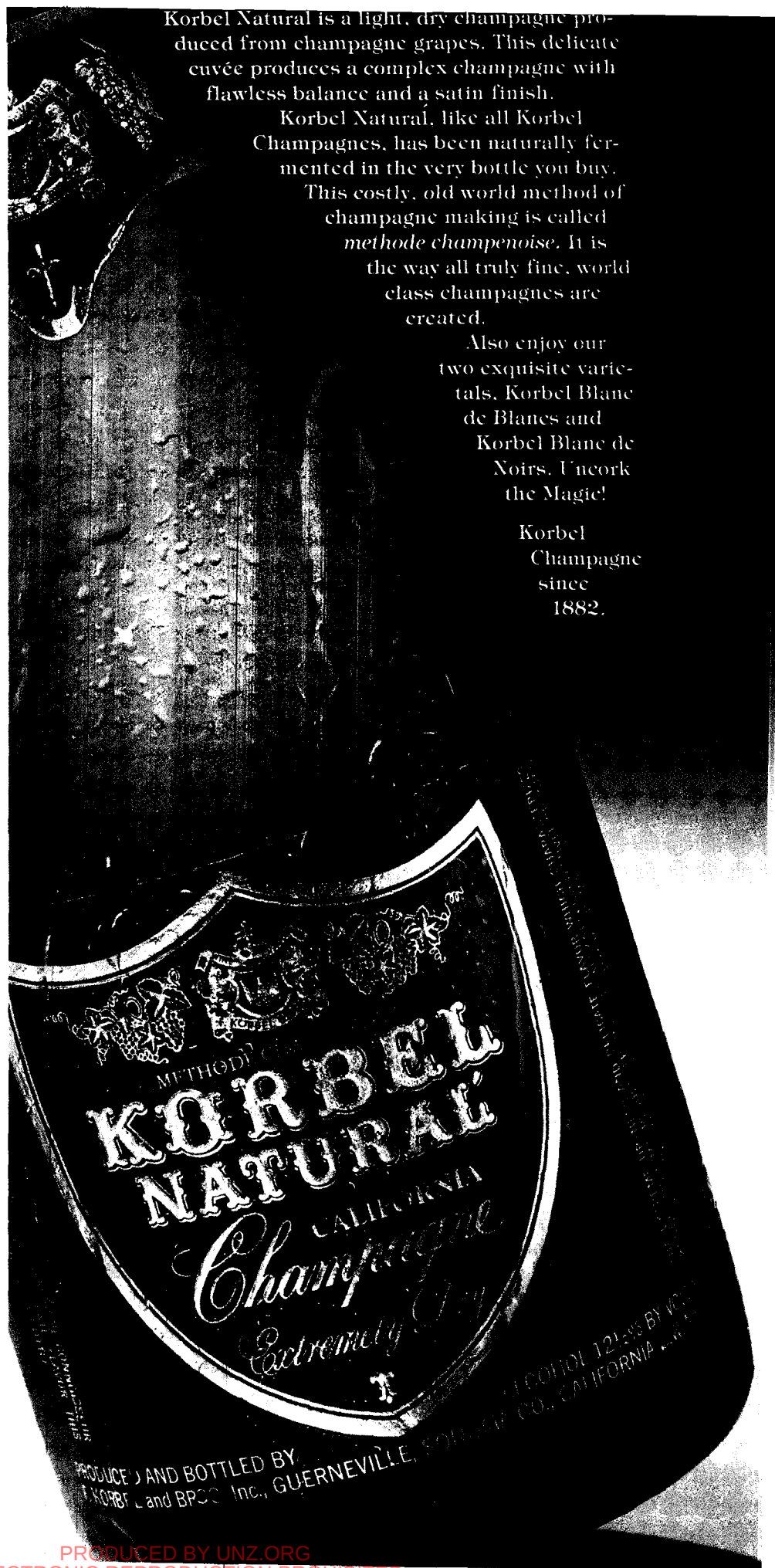
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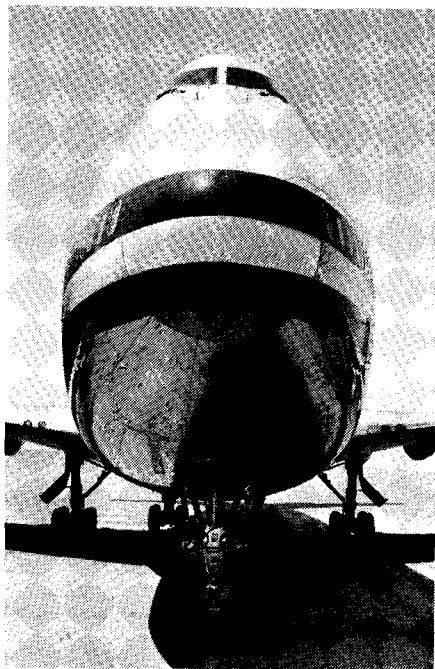
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THE LAST FEW paragraphs suggest that the claim that expert systems reason is ridiculous. It would appear far more accurate to describe their operation as releasing, or retrieving, the reasoning that the expert and the programmer have at great pains drawn out of themselves, packaged, and placed in the program. Attributing the output of an expert system to an autonomous mental life seems no more sensible than confusing a phonograph with a musician or even a composer.

Surprisingly, there is a reasonable reply, which begins with the observation that it is always possible to explain the behavior of an entity in terms of its parts. We do this with human beings sometimes, describing their actions as "nothing but" the working out of what is in their genes, hormones, diet, psychodynamics, posture, social conditioning, or yin/yang account. The rest of the time we attribute a person's behavior to him or her as a whole. There may be good reason to look at computers only from the reductionist perspective; if so, fine. But no one doing so should be amazed to discover that the actions of a computer can be traced to the nature of its parts.

It would be convenient to have an independent definition of "reasoning," a standard against which anything—machines, animals, or human beings—might be judged. Hannah Arendt once wrote that thinking implies a withdrawal from the particular and the empirical into the abstract, the ideal, and the general. It is a retreat from sense impressions, she said, from what lies immediately at hand, into matters that lie elsewhere, perhaps over the horizon, perhaps, more fundamentally, within. If this is the test, expert systems clearly fail it. At present they are completely dedicated to the specific details of the individual case.

They need not be, however. The next generation of these systems are expected to contain internal models of the normal, or ideal, operation of whatever processes they are concerned with. A system meant to diagnose stomach complaints, for instance, would first accept information about the behavior of a patient's stomach, then run a model of normal stomach activity, and finally describe how the entered data differed from what they would have been if everything were normal. When such systems are built—and that day is not especially near at hand—they will meet the Arendt test. Or so it would seem.

Typically, we move through our lives

in a sort of dim quasi-consciousness, reacting intuitively to events as they stream by. Now and then some novelty occurs that requires more of us, that is proof against the old solutions. When this happens, we stop, break from the rhythm of our reflexes, and think. As Arendt said, we try to find contexts that are new and yet to the point. This suggests another, perhaps better, universal standard: an entity—animal, vegetable, or electronic—can be said to reason to the degree that it can deal competently with novelty.

This is an even tougher standard than the Arendt test. The universe of problems that expert systems can deal with is composed largely of those that the experts in the field think of as routine cases. Hand such a system a problem any great distance beyond this line, and it will fail utterly. "Expert systems are best at those activities where the behavior of people is itself most rulelike," says Bruce Roberts, a scientist at Bolt Beranek and Newman, a Cambridge, Massachusetts, consulting firm. The boundary emerges early in the development process. As long as the interviews are restricted to routine cases, development proceeds smoothly; beyond the routine each increment of progress seems to cost more and accomplish less. The interviewees begin to have more trouble articulating exactly how they make their decisions, the interaction problems between rules grow worse, and the number of cases covered by each new rule shrinks.

Why this happens is unclear. Perhaps human beings rely on two separate systems for modeling reality, two internal "representation technologies." One is constructed from and used to solve routine cases; the other is used to relate exceptions and qualifications to one another and to the simple model. For some reason it seems harder to capture the knowledge of the second sphere in rules. Greg Vesonder, of Bell Labs, who was a principal in the design of ACE, an expert system used by phone companies to associate customer complaints with specific cables or switch boxes, believes that the old distinction between learning from textbooks or lectures and learning by doing is relevant to this experience. At present, he says, expert-system applications seem restricted to those activities that can be learned from books. For most of us, reason is the name of the resource we call upon when books fail. □

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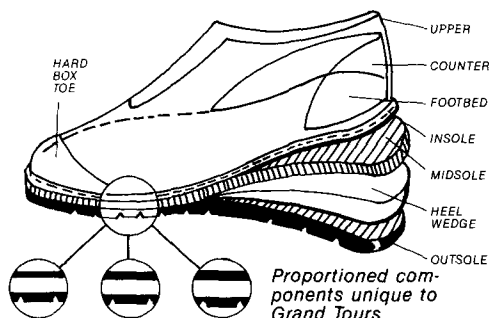
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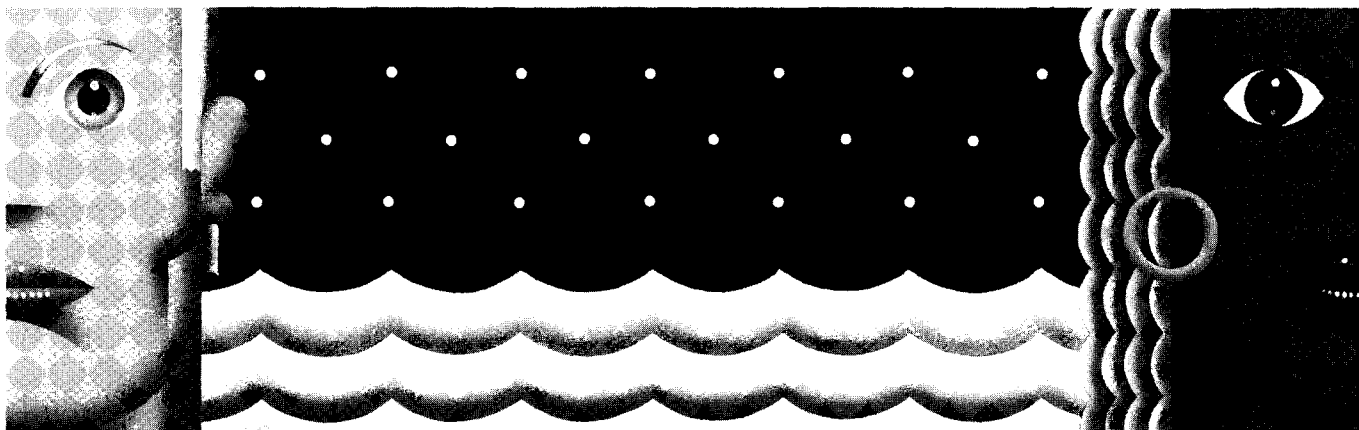
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BY JAMES ATLAS

CONTINENTAL DRIFT
by Russell Banks.
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"IT'S NOT MEMORY you need for telling this story, the sad story of Robert Raymond Dubois, the story that ends along the back streets and alleys of Miami, Florida, on a February morning in 1981, that begins way to the north in Catamount, New Hampshire, on a cold, snow-flecked afternoon in December 1979, the story that tells what happened to young Bob Dubois in the months between the wintry afternoon in New Hampshire and the dark, wet morning in Florida and tells what happened to the several people who loved him and to some Haitian people and a Jamaican and to Bob's older brother Eddie Dubois who loved him but thought he did not and to Bob's best friend Avery Boone who did not love him but thought he did and to the women who were loved by Bob Dubois nearly as much as and differently from the way that he loved his wife Elaine."

Well! Numbed by the desultory, plotless novels of so many seasons, the reviewer sits up and blinks awake. What is this? You mean he's going to tell a story? And it's not about sensitive childhoods or unhappily married graduate students? That in itself is news. From the very first sentence of *Continental Drift* Russell Banks lets it be known that he's writing a tale in which momentous

things occur. The run-on prose is eager, hurried, like a breathless messenger's report. If the litany of events foretold is melodramatic, it's purposefully so. Banks is imitating the heightened storytelling language of a Haitian voodoo ceremony—the novelist as *loa*, or "mouth-man."

The tragedies in this novel are so awesome, so wrenching, so terrible, that it's hard to believe they're happening to ordinary people. Real-estate speculators who get in over their heads, dope dealers who get mixed up with the wrong crowd, liquor-store clerks who get held up by men willing to kill for a few dollars: these are the kinds of anonymous disasters you read about in the newspaper. In *Continental Drift* Banks has brought them to life, given them reality. His novel explores the seedy, marginal territory that has become so visible lately in American fiction—the drive-ins and shopping malls where Frederick Barthelme's characters hang out, the crummy taverns frequented by Raymond Carver's drunks, the sinister Caribbean islands where Robert Stone's nihilistic drifters end up. What distinguishes Banks from these other chroniclers of the desperate and depressed is a quality of moral outrage. By witnessing his characters' doom he rescues their lives from oblivion, invests them with significance. Every life, he reminds us, is sanctified by the same exhaustive intensity, the same will to matter.

Banks's main character, Bob Dubois, is a furnace repairman in a dilapidated New Hampshire town, one of those towns that flourished in the nineteenth century and have since fallen on hard times, hurt by the general migration from the Northeast to the Sun Belt. Bob still owes

money on his car, he's got a mortgage to worry about, he has to work nights and weekends. Bob is a decent man: "He votes Democratic, as his father did, goes occasionally to mass with his wife and children and believes in God the way he believes in politicians—he knows He exists but doesn't depend on Him for anything. He loves his wife and children. He has a girlfriend." There's only one problem: "He hates his life."

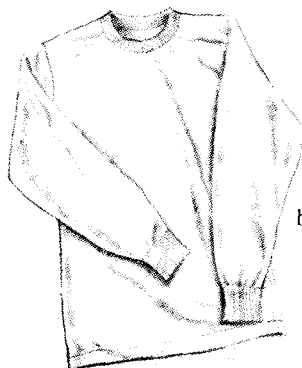
What makes Bob Dubois a great fictional character is nothing that he does; it's what he feels. Like John Updike's Rabbit Angstrom, another inarticulate, ordinary man stifled by the materiality of his needs—the money, the car, the job—and the boredom of routine, Bob has a preternatural instinct for the pathos and frailty of life. Sitting around with his girlfriend, Doris, in her apartment above Irwin's Restaurant and Lounge, he takes in her sad existence, her loneliness, the unkind things age is doing to her body. When he gets home, he's sorry for his wife, Elaine, sitting in front of the television in curlers and a flannel nightgown. He even broods over the bald spot on the back of a Sears, Roebuck salesman's head: "Tissue-thin, pink skin, then eggshell bone, then fleshy brain," he thinks. "That's all there is between everything and nothing." Trying to buy skates for his daughter, he recalls the hot summer's day when he took the family out fishing and glimpsed in their naked bodies a tragic intimation of things to come, "their transience and fragility, their awful availability to pain and destruction." What torments Bob Dubois is our vulnerability, the fear and resentment we feel toward those we love because we know they'll die.

James Atlas is an associate editor of *The Atlantic*.

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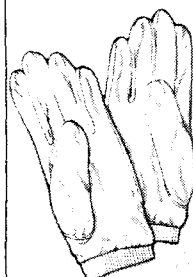
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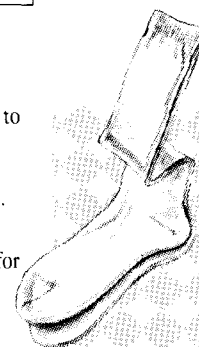
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Lured down to Florida by the prospect of a partnership in his brother's liquor store, Bob finds himself living in a trailer, working twelve hours a day with no partnership in sight. His wife is pregnant again, and Bob is involved with the daughter of the old black man who helps out in the store. The night Elaine goes into labor, Bob is at the Hundred Lakes Motel with his new girlfriend. He tries to do the right thing, but he doesn't know how. "He relies on taboos and circumstances to control his behavior, to make him a 'good man,' so that on those infrequent occasions when neither taboo nor circumstance prohibits him from satisfying an appetite and he does not satisfy that appetite or even attempt to do so, he does not know what to think of himself." The condition of his life is bafflement. One day he wanders into a tackle shop and finds himself admiring a tanned, handsome-looking man who turns out to be Ted Williams, his childhood hero. But even before he knows who it is, he's impressed by the man, the man's car, the man's casual, expensive clothes. Ted Williams is Bob's idea of "a proper grownup," a "full-fledged adult"—something Bob Dubois could never be. "For years, Bob was one of those people who believe that there are two kinds of people, children and adults, and that they are like two different species. Then, when he himself became an adult and learned that the child in him had not only refused to die or disappear, but in fact seemed to be refusing to let the adult have his way. . . . Bob reluctantly, sadly, with increasing loneliness, came to believe that there are no such things as adults after all, only children who try and usually fail to imitate adults."

FOR ALL HIS weakness and simplicity of character, Bob wants to make sense of his life. He frets about his conduct and worries, within the limits of his nature and intelligence, the question of what it means to be good—unlike his brother, Eddie, who doesn't lose a lot of sleep over such matters. Crude, fast-talking, a gambler with bad instincts, Eddie is deep in a number of dubious enterprises that he just knows are going to make it big. Money, he explains to his plodding brother, "is what makes the world go round. . . . The guys with most of the money are always doing at least two of the only three things you can do in this life, which happen to be making things, selling things and buying

things. The really big guys, your Rockefeller's, your Fords, your Du Ponts, they do all three." Eddie buys land and booze and sells it for a profit—"and so on up the hill, all the way to pig heaven." Easy.

Florida is the new frontier, "Disney World and land deals and fast-moving high-interest bank loans." Bob, though, can't make it in this brutal world. He's too cautious, too passive, too naive. Hard up for cash, sick of working in his brother's liquor store, he drifts into a more promising venture as the captain of a fishing boat. But he's still no better off. While his partner is hauling marijuana on his sleek new yacht, Bob is knocking around on a trawler with drunken businessmen out for a good time. Drug-running isn't for him; he's too much of a "country boy at heart." Eventually he succumbs to another illicit occupation, which is supposed to be less risky: running Haitians over to the Florida beaches on his boat. "The more a man trades off his known life, the one in front of him that came to him by birth and the accidents and happenstance of youth, the more of that he trades for dreams of a new life, the less power he has"—but Bob doesn't know that. Like everyone, he imagines that his life is under his own jurisdiction, that he controls his own destiny. To say that events will prove him wrong is to put it mildly.

Entwined with Bob's story is another, the story of a young Haitian woman's struggle to reach the shores of America, which unfolds in separate chapters until the two conjoin in a shocking denouement. Banks's account of Vanise Dorsinville's life in Haiti and the humiliations she suffers at the hands of a barbarous Jamaican sea captain is uncannily vivid. He knows Haitian culture intimately—the idioms, the rituals, the desolate beauty of the poor coastal villages. His prose has a kind of hallucinatory clarity. Island streets by night, "shiny as polished ebony from the recent rain"; the vicious captain who ferries Vanise from Haiti to the Caicos Islands, "roan-colored, bald and heavy-lidded, almost Japanese-looking"; the stark, empty calm of North Caicos, where "long-legged egrets stalk the marshes and gutters and now and then rise awkwardly from the moist ground and soar, suddenly graceful, against the cloudless blue sky"—like Conrad, Banks is determined "above all to make you see."

He's a novelist who clearly has been around. He's full of information about

mortgages, real estate, fishing tackle, navigation, dope smuggling, boats (when Bob's friend Ave dreams of buying a new boat, it's "a high-speed 31-foot Tiara 3100, maybe, with twin 205-horsepower OMC Sea Drive engines . . ."). His ability to evoke the texture of American life—of car interiors, the taste of "Dunkin' Donuts coffee in paper cups," houses with wall-to-wall carpeting and wet bars—rivals Updike's. *Continental Drift* is the most convincing portrait I know of contemporary America: its greed, its uprootedness, its indifference to the past. This is a novel about the way we live now.

Banks has been over some of this ground before in his novels and short stories, but nothing I'd read of his prepared me for this profound and gripping narrative. *Continental Drift* is a lesson in history: it shows us how ordinary, decent men can find themselves enmeshed in events of unspeakable enormity, and be destroyed by them. "It's not memory you need for telling this story. . . ." It's art. □

A NATION IN CRISIS

BY SUSAN KAUFMAN PURCELL

DISTANT NEIGHBORS:
PORTRAIT OF THE MEXICANS
by Alan Riding.
Knopf, \$18.95.

FOR DECADES THE United States has been able to take Mexico's political stability for granted. No longer. Violent upheaval in Central America has aroused fears in Washington that Mexico could be "the last domino" to succumb to Cuban- and Soviet-backed Marxist guerrillas now operating to Mexico's south. Even people who dismiss such fears worry that austerity measures adopted after Mexico's near default in August of 1982 are producing social strains that will soon become politically unmanageable unless substantial economic growth resumes.

Alan Riding, who covered Mexico for *The New York Times* until recently, does not buy the so-called domino theory. But *Distant Neighbors: Portrait of the Mexi-*

cans hardly leaves the reader optimistic about Mexico's future.

Riding does not consider Mexico to be on the verge of collapse. He states, "Nothing has proven more wrong than predicting the demise of Mexico's political system." Past Cassandras erred by failing to understand the system's latent strengths. Riding, who spent more than twelve years in Mexico, avoids this trap. In fact, much of *Distant Neighbors* is a superb, beautifully written description of how and why the Mexican political system has held together despite great social inequality, corruption, and unfulfilled promises. Riding concludes, however, that Mexico is at a crossroads. For its political system to survive current challenges, it must undergo major changes that (and here's the catch) would allow it to remain essentially the same.

To the untutored eye, Mexico's political system is an authoritarian one, with great power centered in the president, and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional clearly dominant. Reminiscent of the political machines that used to dominate the northern cities and the rural South of the United States, the PRI controls the presidency and all state governorships, and it regularly wins an overwhelming majority of the other electoral positions on the national, state, and local levels. Interest groups often operate not as independent entities but as adjuncts of the state. And although the press is nominally free, methods exist and are routinely used to ensure that it supports the government's goals.

But if the political system were as unabashedly authoritarian as these illiberality implies, it would have fallen apart years ago. Instead, Mexico has a record for stability under civilian rule unmatched in Latin America. That is because, Riding explains, "the President can enjoy absolute power so long as he does not wield it absolutely." In other words, Mexico's authoritarianism is tempered by "an enormous capacity to negotiate."

What accounts for this commitment to negotiation? In part it is "fear of another revolution." As a result of the revolution of 1910, which destroyed the landowning elite, brought to power the new middle class, and incorporated peasants and workers into the dominant political party, Mexico lost more than a million people. It does not want to relive that experience. Negotiation is not only preferred, it is necessary. The constitution prohibits the re-election of a presi-

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dent. As a result, every six years the new president and his team must establish cooperative working relationships with political brokers throughout the country if the system is to function smoothly and the destabilizing effects of the excessive use of force are to be avoided.

Until recently the process of negotiation was encouraged by the continuous and often spectacular growth of the Mexican economy. Money turned enemies into friends and strengthened existing political alliances. Whether in the form of jobs, high salaries, subsidies, or outright payoffs, it was the grease that eliminated the squeaks in the political machine. Mexico's political culture helped ensure that the resources generated by the economy did not have to be spread too thin. Fatalism and expectations of disappointment or even disaster,

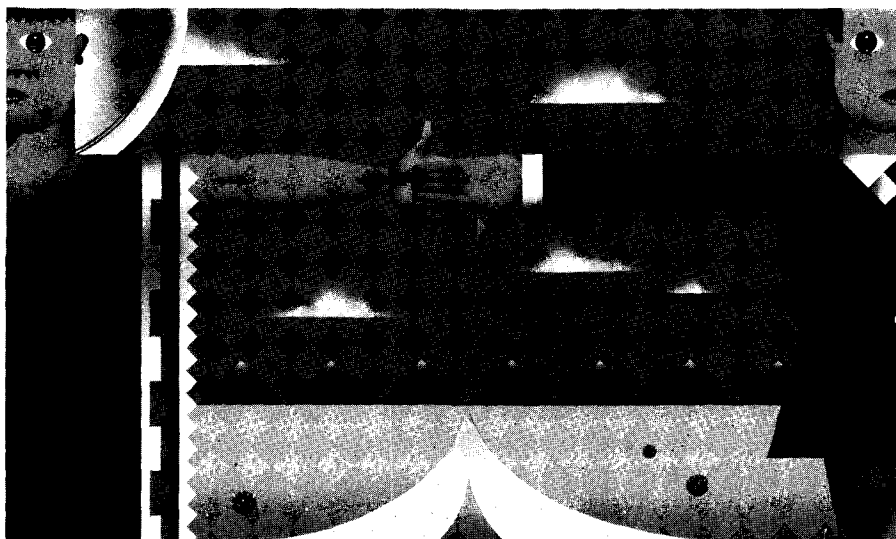
that without an economy that can finance "the traditionally profligate ways of the political system," that system will have to change.

Can Mexico adapt? It has in the past. But recently the country's problems and its handling of them have been getting worse. According to Riding, "The last three changes of administration have been marked by crises of such severity that public credibility in the entire system has been badly eroded." To some extent the crises were the result of the "idiosyncratic vanities and abuses of power" of Mexico's past three presidents. Riding does not explain why they behaved as they did, but I will hazard a guess. Each man entered the presidency believing in the myth of the all-powerful president. The reality proved quite different. Each discovered that he was se-

ministration have changed, a fact that reinforces the idea that the traditional system is unworkable. Both Echeverría and Mexico's current president, Miguel de la Madrid, have promoted politically inexperienced young technocrats to high office. These appointees represented fresh talent uncompromised by ties to either the failed policies or the personnel of the preceding administrations. Such "solutions," however, can produce more problems than they solve. Owing to the lack of experience of Mexico's recent and present leaders, Riding argues, "political management of the system has . . . lost some of its smoothness." There is a deepening rift between *técnicos* and *políticos*, who have different visions of how to govern Mexico and the direction in which Mexico should go. The *técnicos* are modern Mexicans, eager to end the inefficiency, corruption, and demagoguery that has plagued Mexican politics. If the *técnicos* have their way, the *políticos* say, they will weaken the ties between the rulers and the ruled. Mexico will be less able to deal with its problems and more beholden to foreign interests.

To these problems that of Central America must be added. Riding goes further than the Mexican government does when he acknowledges that upheaval in Central America could create difficulties for Mexico. Mexico has supported Marxist revolutionaries in Nicaragua and El Salvador but not in neighboring Guatemala, because "open support for Guatemalan rebels would create tensions that could force Mexico to militarize its southern border and risk destabilization of its frontier state of Chiapas," he points out. "Further, a Marxist-Leninist regime in Guatemala would polarize political opinion in Mexico and invite a direct U.S. military intervention on Mexico's southern border." *Distant Neighbors*, however, correctly considers the Central American threat to be of less immediate concern than the social and political strains caused by Mexico's inadequately expanding economy.

HOW SHOULD MEXICO handle its socio-economic problems and rebuild confidence in its political system? In his concluding chapter Riding suddenly turns romantic. Mexicans, he says, "felt comfortable with the system when it was peculiarly Mexican, with its mixture of authoritarianism and paternalism, of cynicism and idealism, of conciliation and negotiation." If Mexico reforms in



combined with respect for hierarchical principles of authority, kept the poor loyal to the leaders, who were thus better able to tend to the needs of the more demanding middle and upper classes.

THE CURRENT economic crisis makes it impossible to play by the old rules of the political game. The resources are lacking. Annual growth rates of six to eight percent have been replaced by growth rates of two to three percent, following a period of flat or negative growth. Austerity has replaced the free spending of the oil-boom years. Mexico is only partly to blame for its plight; a world recession, a decline in petroleum prices, and a rise in U.S. interest rates combined with economic mismanagement to produce it. If steady economic growth resumes in the near future, it will be modest. Riding predicts

verely constrained in his ability to make things happen. The gap between his expectations and reality produced intense frustration, leading to erratic and desperate attempts to solve intractable problems. A recent example is President José López Portillo's takeover of the banks in 1982. Instead of halting capital flight, it further reduced confidence in Mexico's deteriorating economy. His predecessor, Luis Echeverría, expropriated thousands of acres of private landholdings only days before leaving office. He thereby satisfied some land-hungry peasants, but he also provoked rumors of an impending military coup. And President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz caused the 1968 "Tlatelolco massacre" by ordering the military to fire on student demonstrators in a last-ditch effort to restore order before the Olympic Games.

Patterns of recruitment into the ad-

ways that make it less Mexican, he argues, it will not survive. Riding's position is an implicit criticism of De la Madrid's administration, which has tried to make the system more democratic, decentralized, efficient, and honest. Riding argues that its policies in fact weaken the system's roots in the population. The system becomes "less truly democratic," because it ceases to represent "real Mexicans." If the system continues to respond "to the Americanized minority," it will intensify "the contradictions within the country" and "risk a backlash from the past."

I suppose that Riding's "real Mexicans" are the rural and urban poor and anyone else who has not succumbed to U.S. influence. But why he assumes that a "Mexican" solution to the current crisis will serve these people's interests is not clear. Decades of rule by Mexican *políticos* have produced a rhetorical commitment to social justice that remains largely unimplemented, as Riding acknowledges.

Riding is right in warning against a wholesale or precipitate adoption of "Americanized" ways. But he fails to warn that Mexico is equally in danger of going to the opposite extreme. Many of Mexico's intellectual and political leaders are anti-American and strongly nationalistic, and they are firm believers in the virtues of a politically centralized and economically interventionist state. Having appropriated to themselves the symbols of the Mexican Revolution, they can accuse those who want to liberalize Mexico's political and economic systems of being counter-revolutionary, un-Mexican instruments of U.S. imperialism. The underlying assumption is that Mexico can maintain independence from its powerful northern neighbor only by being different from and acting in opposition to the United States. As a result of this mind-set, Mexico's governing class distrusts or opposes reforms that might enhance Mexico's ability to adapt successfully to its new internal and external environment.

Mexico may yet muddle through its time of troubles without significant reform, especially if the U.S. economy avoids a deep recession and oil prices do not plummet. But Mexicans might have a better future if their leaders could find a way to maintain Mexico's identity and independence without assuming that everything that is "Mexican" is in Mexico's interest and everything that is "American" is not. □

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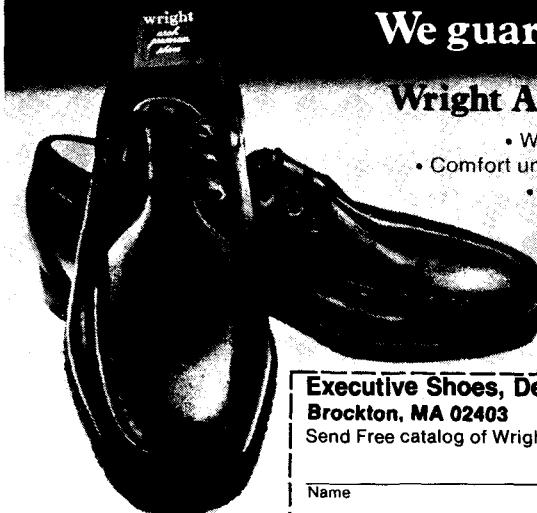
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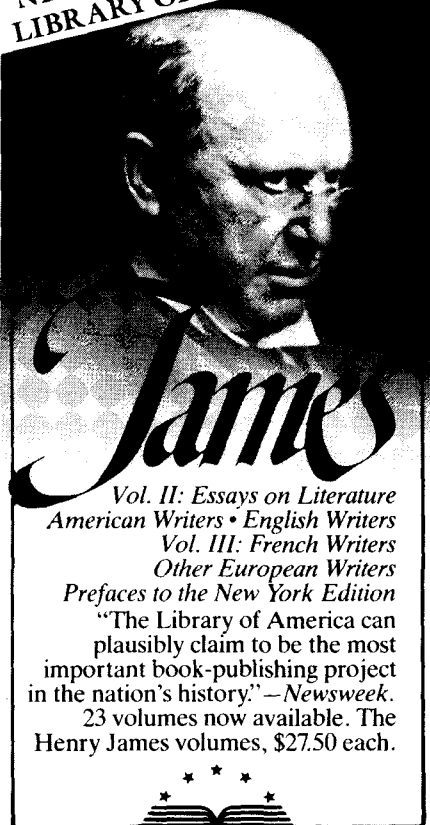
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BRIEF REVIEWS



THE LIFE OF THE PARTY by Maureen Freely. Simon and Schuster, \$17.95. Hector is the Life of the novel's title, and the Party is a group of expatriates serving, in the late 1960s, on the faculty of an American college in Istanbul. When sober, Hector is a good teacher and sound citizen. Drunk, he is a mobile disaster area with an alarming ability to pull friends and colleagues into his own mad orbit. Much of Hector's power arises from the weakness of his associates, most of whom are in Turkey because laziness or eccentricity or professional inadequacy prevents them from holding comparable positions at home. Drifting in an alien culture, uncontrolled by fading memories of their own, they have become an oddball lot whose amoral capers arouse hostility in a country already growing resentful of American influence. The collision of incompatible social standards that Ms. Freely ironically describes is both grim and comic. It makes stimulating reading.

SCHUBERT by George R. Marek. Viking, \$19.95. Mr. Marek believes that the general public thinks of Franz Schubert as a natural, virtually untrained musical genius and a perpetually disheveled, grubby, cold, hungry, pianoless Bohemian. His biography of the composer is designed to correct this sentimental misapprehension, which may in fact exist only in the author's imagination, for an unofficial local poll turns up nobody with any idea at all of what Schubert's life was like. There is evidently a need for this brisk, witty, musically astute biography, even though that need is not quite the one that Mr. Marek had in mind.

THE ILLUSTRATOR IN AMERICA 1880-1980 by Walt and Roger Reed. Madison Square Press, \$48.50. The Society of Illustrators has sponsored this pictorial and biographical history of a century of illustrative art. It is a fascinating record, with commentaries by artists interspersed among illustrations that display, decade by decade, changes in public taste and interest just as clearly as they do the concur-

rent changes in artistic influences and techniques. One change is rather puzzling—the steady disappearance of women from the field. Between 1900 and 1910, ten of the fifty-one artists listed were women. Between 1970 and 1980, only two of the fifty-eight artists listed are women, and since one of them works in collaboration with her husband, the figure should probably be reduced to one and a half. What has not changed in a century is the cowboys-and-Indians theme. Walt Spitzmiller's rodeo rider of 1981 is brother to the Remington (1861-1909) frontiersmen and close kin to those of Felix Octavius Carr Darley, who was born in 1822 and "can well be considered America's first important illustrator."

JERUSALEM INN by Martha Grimes. Little, Brown, \$15.95. Ms. Grimes's latest English-based murder mystery starts intriguingly but proves disappointing. The plot is a moldering relic with a hole in it large enough to admit the ancestral coach and four.

LOUISE BOGAN: A PORTRAIT by Elizabeth Frank. Knopf, \$22.95. Although Ms. Frank is inclined to overquote and overpraise Bogan's early work, her biography of the poet is in the main rewarding. She skillfully interweaves the poetry with the events of the poet's life, and Bogan's resourcefulness in self-provoked adversity, combined with her cantankerous independence, makes that life consistently interesting. Her poetry steadily improved, and the later work deserves the admiration that Ms. Frank bestows, if rather too verbosely, upon it.

WHITE NOISE by Don DeLillo. Viking, \$16.95. Mr. DeLillo's novel is a deadpan black comedy in which the multifarious trivialities, complications, useless facts, and dangerous technologies of the modern world are interpreted as attempts to camouflage the pervasive fear of death. His hero is a professor at a rural college, where, although ignorant of German, he has made a successful career out of "Hitler studies." Other events in the story involve a similar balance of the plausible and the absurd, and together they constitute a bitter but very readable satiric lament for human helplessness.

RENOIR by Barbara Ehrlich White. Abrams, \$75.00. The author uses extensive documentation, including Renoir's letters (many previously unpublished), to demonstrate connections between the

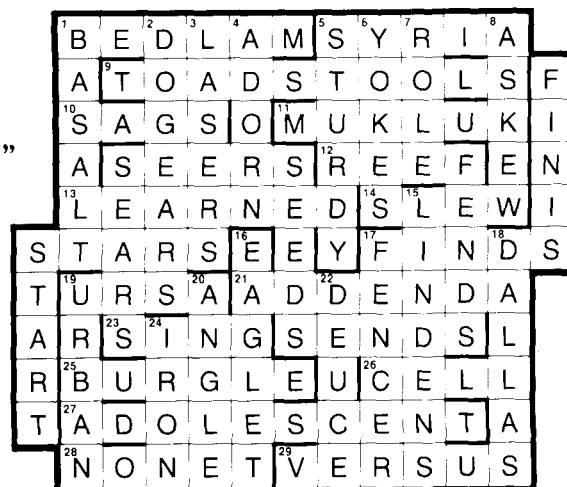
painter's circumstances and the alterations in his style and subject matter. Those alterations occurred for the most part because of Renoir's desire to earn a decent living—an understandable ambition, thwarted for years. Slow success always makes a better narrative than easy triumph, and Renoir's story, involving as it does all the artistic feuds and ferments of the time, and well told by Ms. White, is thoroughly interesting. The text is most generously illustrated.

AUGUST STRINDBERG by *Olof Lagercrantz*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$25.50. "From the outset," Mr. Lagercrantz warns, "any biographer of Strindberg must in a sense protect himself from his subject: for every phase of his life, Strindberg decided how he wanted to be understood and deliberately created a persona for himself." Those personae included the poor boy (his family was perfectly well off), the abused husband (his wives were the real sufferers), the innovative scientist (he knew as much science as a hedgehog), and the starving artist (he was battenning on good Swedish cooking). There were other acts as well, and Mr. Lagercrantz tracks them all down with a gleeful exasperation that never diminishes his respect for Strindberg the brilliant and influential writer, as opposed to Strindberg the poseur. It is normal for a creative author to convert mundane molehills into artistic mountains. Strindberg seemingly required an intermediate step in which he contrived, often by shamelessly devious means, to build the real molehill into a solid little knoll from which his invention then soared. The process was hard on friends and spouses who found themselves abruptly miscast in Strindberg's private dramas, but it provides his biographer with the opportunity for ingenious and often amusing detective work, and offers readers a history lively with irrational divagations and astonishing contretemps. This is the kind of life that makes one want to read the works.

WORLD OF WORDS by *Gary Jennings*. Atheneum, \$16.95 and \$10.95. Mr. Jennings loves words and happily examines their uses and abuses in English or any other language within reach. He has no particular goal in view—simply a ramble through the linguistic labyrinth. Logophiles who missed the earlier edition of Mr. Jennings's book will enjoy his unpredictable mixture of learning and frivolity.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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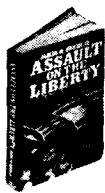
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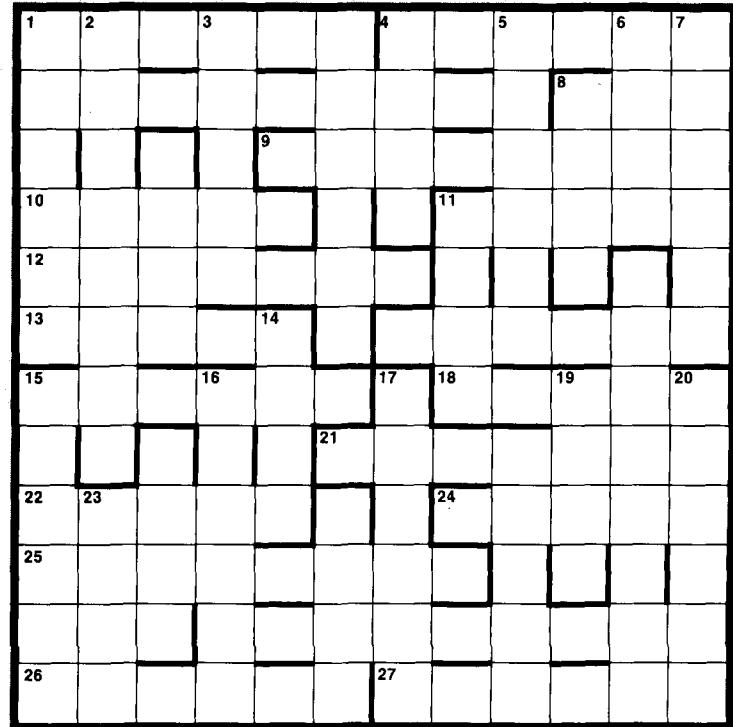
THE ATLANTIC PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

COMPOUND WORDS

Answers to the six "Compound" clues are not to be entered in the diagram. Instead, solvers must determine the two components of each of these answers and enter them in the diagram. It is left to solvers to figure out where these twelve components belong in the grid. Acrosses and Downs are normal. Answers include an unfamiliar word at 3 Down and five proper nouns.

*The solution to last month's
Puzzler appears on page 101.*



ACROSS

1. Dog has sleeping place in pen (6)
4. Arab, if moving to African land (6)
9. Perfect female criminal (8)
10. Opening one snare gripping squirrel's tail (5)
11. Modernize Descartes on women (5)
12. Wiggling out, I can give warning (7)
13. In conclusion, this writer is correct (5)
18. Dawn expressed sorrow (5)
21. Back cover to *Madame Bovary* showing predicament (7)
22. *Figaro* aria is interrupted by cheering (5)
24. Bird with hood on (5)
25. Hurry back with cloth carrier for infant (8)

26. Baseball team holding Simpson back gets order to stop (6)
27. Helps a crackpot with Hebrew letters (6)

DOWN

1. Segment about USA's first channel (6)
2. On Monday, motel in California has something spicy (8)
3. Musical hush in *E.T.* act—phony (5)
4. Research facility uplifted about a Canaanite idol (4)
5. Snake keeps general out (6)
6. Bread's said to react to yeast (4)
7. A distressed wren's echo (6)
8. Guard incline (4)
11. Space in boggy ground turned up (4)
14. Buck is expensive for audience (4)

15. Fictional detective half-gets rework (6)
16. Mafia's code covers up disaster (6)
17. Jagger getting free in a cab (6)
19. Delivery service carries piece of mail for judges (4)
20. Stakes supporting northern French port (6)
23. Destroy bear, removing the head (4)

COMPOUND

- a. Company turned in new ham flavor (5)
- b. Smile about one very loud beast (7)
- c. Something aesthetic in tiny drink (7)
- d. Sibling has mysterious Zen medal (6)
- e. Fresh, exercising endless energy (5)
- f. Fix tacos in such a dish (9)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.



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